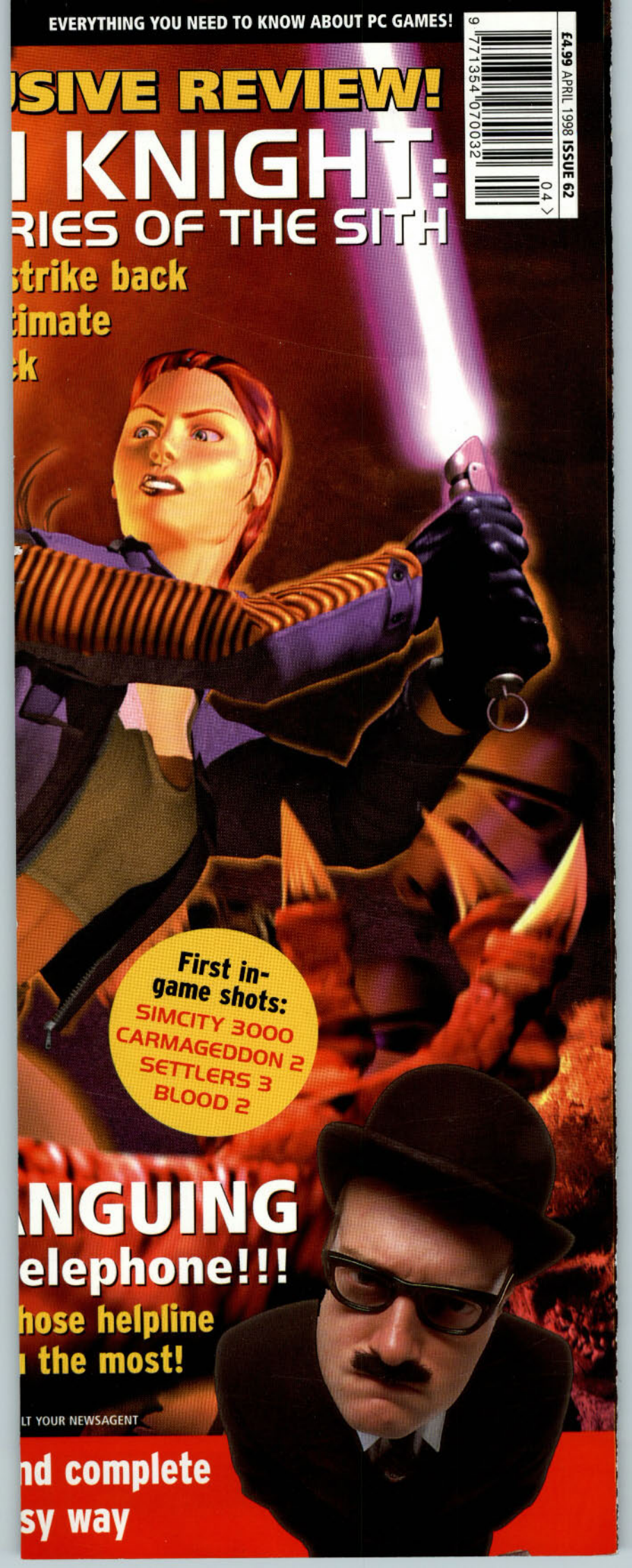
EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT PC GAMES!

£4.99 APRIL 1998 ISSUE 62

USIVE REVIEW!

I KNIGHT:
RIES OF THE SITH

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First in-game shots:
SIMCITY 3000
CARMAGEDDON 2
SETTLERS 3
BLOOD 2

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3 GAMES IN 1!

ARCADE

10 missions where you enter the action straight on with a fully equipped ship.

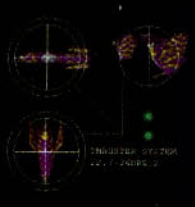
SIMULATION

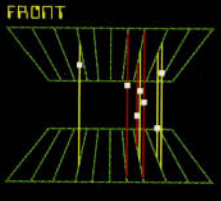
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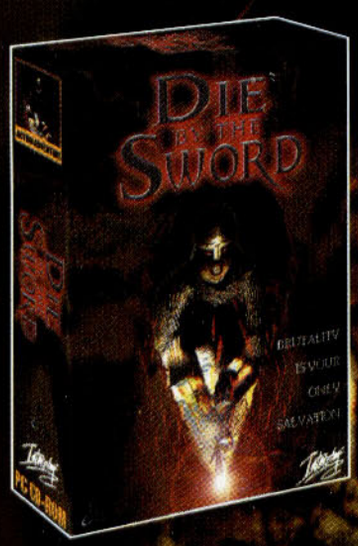
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WIN! WIN! WIN!

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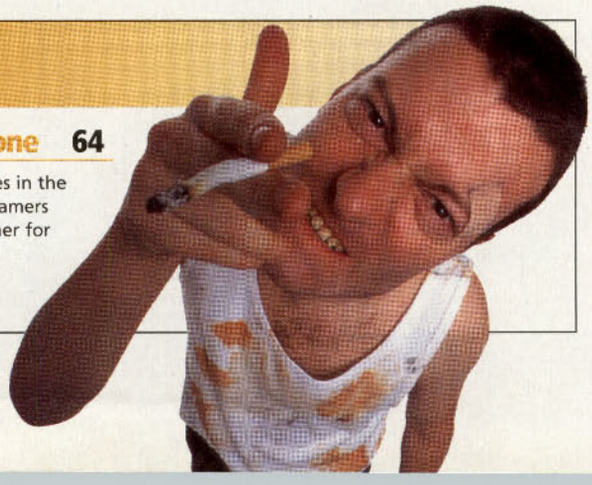
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The PC needs another arcade racing game like a hole in the head. So why can't we stop playing this one?

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Jedi Knight:
Mysteries Of The Sith

Have LucasArts created a new benchmark in 3D action gaming? Turn to page 72 and find out.

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PPA

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CD ZONE

On the disc



ON THIS MONTH'S CD ZONE WE'VE GOT A MYRIAD OF AWESOME PLAYABLE demos including FIVE fantastic EXCLUSIVE titles that you won't see on any other PC magazine. Sit back, slip the CD into your drive and get ready to enjoy the groundbreaking *Mysteries Of The Sith*, the fabulous *Forsaken*, the incredible *Incoming* and the fantastic *F1 97*. We've also got a very early alpha version of *Earthsiege 3* for you to have a look at, and the latest *Quake II Point Release* that includes EIGHT new deathmatch levels and iD's official bug fixes. Be sure to check out our two bonus CDs and see if you've won a fabulous prize!

MINIMUM SPECIFICATION

You'll need at least a Pentium 133 with 16Mb RAM to run the software on this month's CD-ROM.

Many of the programs are designed to run under Windows 95 and, as a result, some of them may require a Pentium 166 with 32Mb RAM to run satisfactorily. Please note that some games also require a 3D accelerator card to run.

Use the browser and menu system to see which demos are Windows 95, DOS and 3D accelerator only.

Help!

CD trouble? HD playing up? Don't worry – phone our helpline and sort yourself out pronto!

HD DISK HELP

Phone Matthew on 01274 736990
Any weekday between 9am and 4pm

CD-ROM HELP

Phone ABT on 01708 250250 or pczone@abt-net.demon.co.uk
Any weekday between 11am and 5pm
(Please DO NOT phone the *PC Zone* office as your calls will NOT be answered)

If you are calling either helpline, then please take note of the following points:

- If possible have your PC operating and near to the phone when you call.
- If this is not possible, note down all relevant information ie system type, sound card, RAM etc, plus the nature of the fault.
- Make sure you have a pen and paper to hand to jot down the relevant info when you call.

No CD?

If you don't have the CD issue, then fear not! Simply fill out this slip, enclose your HDs from the cover plus a cheque for a whole £1 and send it to:

CD Exchange (62), *PC Zone*, Bradley Pavilions, Bradley Stoke North, Bristol BS12 0BQ

Your details (please print clearly)

Name:

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CDs from previous issues are also available.

JEDI KNIGHT: MYSTERIES OF THE SITH (LucasArts/VIE)

EXCLUSIVE!





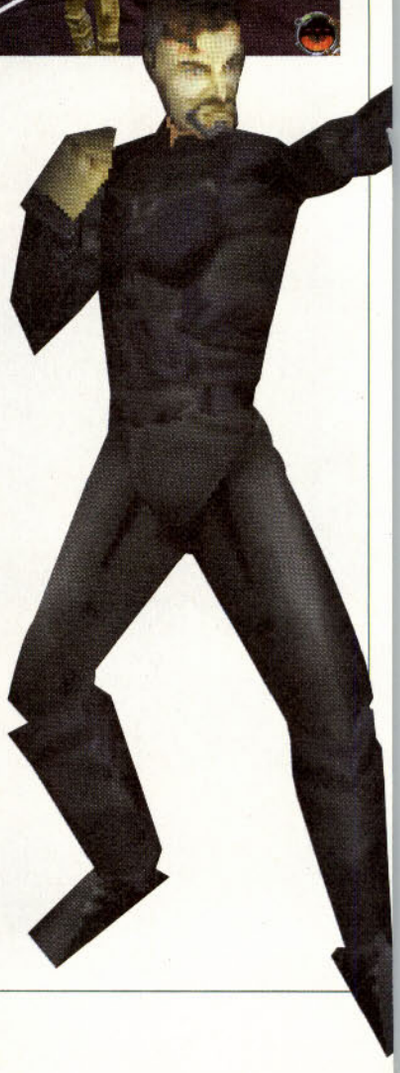
HE STILL WALKS LIKE HE'S GOT a thermal detonator between his matted cheeks but that doesn't stop the 'Bearded Jedi' Kyle Katarn from picking up his lightsaber in another *Star Wars* adventure. This massive first level from LucasArts' superb mission pack has Imperial troops attacking the Rebel base. Do what you can to halt them and make your escape through the base to a waiting Imperial shuttle.

Controls: Keyboard/joystick/mouse

W or 8 (keypad)	Move forward
S or 2 (keypad)	Move backward
SHIFT	Run
CAPS LOCK	Slow mode (hold key down while moving)
A or 1 (keypad)	Sidestep to left
D or 3 (keypad)	Sidestep to right
ALT	Slide toggle (modifies your turn right/turn left controls)
‹ (directional) or 4 (keypad)	Turn left
› (directional) or 6 (keypad)	Turn right
X or right mouse button:	Jump and swim up
C	Crouch and swim down
HOME or 5 (keypad)	Centre view (centres your view in middle of screen)
PG UP	Look up
PG DN	Look down
V	Free look

KEYBOARD CONTROLS:

, and /	Cycle weapons
CTRL / 0 (keypad) or left mouse button	Primary fire
Z	Secondary fire
,	Kyle's fists
.	Bryar pistol
3	Stormtrooper rifle
4	Thermal detonator
5	Bowcaster
6	Imperial repeater
7	Rail detonator
8	Sequencer charge
9	Concussion rifle
0	Lightsaber





FORSAKEN (Acclaim)

Acclaim's latest may look like *Descent* but it most certainly isn't. Two single-player levels are on offer here and the idea is to get through the meandering tunnels retrieving as many gold bars as possible. The more you collect, the more lives you accumulate – and you'll need them as well. When you've had enough of that, why not settle down to a leisurely spot of deathmatching in the battle dome?

Controls: Keyboard/mouse/joystick

L M B	Fire primary weapon
R M B	Fire secondary weapon
A	Forward
Z	Reverse
← → ↑ ↓	Rotate bile
ALT	Slide (strafe) mode
CTRL	Fire primary
	Fire secondary
Q / E	Bank left/right
B	Mines
HOME / END	Cycle weapons
ESC	Pause game (access menu)
F1	Keyboard config
F4	Remove screen text
F6	Rear-view window
+ / -	Change screen size
~	Pulsar
1	Trojax
2	Suss gun
6	MUG
7	Solaris
0	Gravgon
.	MFRL (multiple-fire rocket launcher)
F9 - F11	Send taunt message
Shift F9 - F11	Enter your own message



INCOMING (Rage)

One of the best examples of what a 3D card can do, and though you don't need one to appreciate the game you'll sure as hell need one to appreciate the graphics. Two missions are included in this demo: one has you defending your base from alien attack and the other puts you in charge of a helicopter. After you've played them, sit back and watch rolling demos of some of the later levels.

Controls: Keyboard/mouse/joystick

← → ↑ ↓	Movement
	Fire
Left SHIFT	Fire secondary weapon
Q / A	Forward/reverse
Z / X	Rotate left/right



EARTHSIEGE 3 (Dynamix/CUC)

If you play demos in order to get a feel for a particular game, then steer well clear of this. It's a pre-alpha test release of CUC/Sierra's latest Herc game, which means that there's a fair chance that the final version could end up being something else entirely. Not surprising considering it's multi-player only. We'll have a newer single-player version soon, but if this is anything to go by we hope it won't be too different. Any comments about the game can be posted to **www.dynamix.com/es3/forums.html**.

Controls: Keyboard/joystick/mouse

ALT + RETURN	Toggle screen mode
F5	Chat
W / X	Forward/backward
A / D	Turn left/right
S / BACKSPACE	Stop
Mouse	Targeting
LMB	Fire
RMB	Target enemy
T	Target closest non-team-mate
1 - 4	Select weapon
L	Dual-fire mode
Number pad 9	Engage chameleon cloak
Number pad 3	Crouch/stand
	Reincarnation
SHIFT - S	Shuts down/powers up reactor
F1	Configure HUD mode
F2	Sim preferences setting
F3	Toggle player scoreboard
F4	Draw in wireframe
F5	Send message all
F6	Send message team
F7	Send message target
F8	Send message to specific player
F11	Set full screen to software
F12	Set full screen to glide (if available)
O	Projectile camera
ENTER	Activate/deactivate shield
SHIFT + ENTER	Activate/deactivate shield tracking
Q / Z	Focus shields forward/rear
[/]	Rotate shield focus left/right
R	Step through scanner ranges
SHIFT - R	Toggle active/passive sensor mode

GRUESOME CASTLE

(Gee Whiz)

Our suspicions were initially aroused when the adventure started outside a van that looked very similar to the 'Mystery Machine'. However, it was when trying to get into the castle that they left the biggest clue – there was no sign of Scooby Doo. "Yeah, and I would've got away with it too, if it wasn't for those pesky kids."

Controls: Keyboard/joypad

← → ↑ ↓	Movement
L SHIFT	Hold to run
CTRL	Hold for look around mode
Z / X	Look at/use an object/binocular zoom
C / TAB	Open/close inventory
	Skip text
A	Change camera modes
S	Move camera in/out
Q	Quit the game



RED LINE RACER (Ubi Soft)

With Ubi Soft's new arcade racer we can all find out what it's like to be a girl on a motorcycle (or a boy if you're of the feminine persuasion). Complete with gender-correct yelps of pain as bodies hit the tarmac, this one-track demo should whet the appetite for the full game.

Controls: Keyboard/joystick

↑ ↓	Manual gearbox
← →	Steering
L SHIFT	Accelerator
L CTRL	Brake
Z	Signal to other players
A	Turbo boost
ESC	Pause menu
F1	Help
F2	Change camera view

VR POWERBOAT RACING

(Interplay)

The ongoing quest for original racing games takes to the briny in Interplay's tricky one-course demo. The difficulty is in timing your jumps and using your trim (whatever that is) to perfect cornering. Once you've got the hang of things you'll probably get lost behind the scenery. Still, I suppose you just try and try again, eh? ▶

COMPUSERVE CD



THIS MONTH'S THIRD CD would normally be either a) snapped in half and thrown in the nearest circular filing cabinet, b) used as a shiny coaster, or c) melted in the oven and moulded into a nifty flowerpot.

Before you do find other uses for it, just think what you could do with ten hours free Internet access with the UK's biggest on-line service. You could play games, find out everything you could possibly want to know about geraniums, or even hack into US defence networks and spark off a third world war. Yes, the possibilities are endless.

All you need to do is pop the CD into the drive and wait for the friendly and functional interactive tour to kick in. Also included on the CD are demos for *Tomb Raider II* and *Worms II*.

If you have any problems with CompuServe or the CD contents please do not call *PC Zone*, CompuServe have their own support number: **0990 134 819.**

FREE INTERNET ACCESS!

Controls: Keyboard/joystick

←→	Steering
↑	Accelerate
[/ ;	Trim up
@ / ?	Trim down
P	Pause
ESC	Exit race
PG UP / PG DN	Change view
F1	Help
F5	TV camera
F6	Toggle map
F7 / F8	Zoom map



BATTLEZONE (Activision)

Fifteen years on and Activision's tank classic gets wheeled out again, this time in glorious technicolor. The featured mission is set on the moon between the Americans and Soviets, and as the apple pie-eatin' Yanks you must protect not only your base from attack but also your vehicles.

Controls: Keyboard/mouse/joystick

Q	Slow forward
W	Forward
A / D	Strafe left/right
S	Stop and back
F & mouse down	Pitch up
C & mouse up	Pitch down
Mouse	Turn left/right
E	Jump
LMB	Fire weapon
RMB	Select weapon
F8 - F12	Select hard point
Ctrl & F8 - F12	Link similar hard points
SHIFT & F1 - F4	Views
ESC	Game options menu
1 - 0	Activate command interface menus
CTRL & RMB	Multiple select units
	Issue smart reticule command to selected unit
ALT	Select target
TAB	Cancel selected command menu
CTRL & F1 - F7	Assign units to quick key
F1 - F7	Select mapped group
T	Target enemy on/off
N	Select next nav beacon
I	Get information on object under reticule
H	Hop out of vehicle
CTRL - B	Bail out
K	Deploy/undeploy deployable vehicles
CTRL - C	Chat to another player in multi-player
PAUSE	Pause game
ALT - X	Exit mission

LURID LAND (Illusion Softworks)

Collect the four coloured keys and free the prisoners and that's it – pretty simple, huh? What else could you possibly want from an old-style platform game apart from artless graphics and uncomplicated gameplay? This demo features ten levels and even two-player support.

Controls: Keyboard

←→↑↓	Movement (player 1)
A D W S	Movement (player 2)
CTRL / ALT	Fire player 1/2
PAUSE	Pause
ESC	Quit/restart game

MONTEZUMA'S RETURN (Utopia Technologies)

Indiana Jones? Pah! He makes pink frilly dresses and drinks milk. Max Montezuma – now *he's* the man you ask for when it comes to finding lost treasure. This 3D platform game features a number of linked puzzles, and if you find all the gold you can access a secret level.

Controls: Keyboard

←→	Rotate view
↑↓	Run forward/backward
Z / X	Run left/right
Left SHIFT	Punch
	Kick
Left CTRL	Jump
+ / -	Resize view



F1 97 (Psygnosis)

One of the best racing games so far this year, it's fast and you don't even have to like Formula One to enjoy it. Choose a car and race around Silverstone or try out a few practice laps around the other tracks featured in the full game.

Controls: Keyboard/joystick

←→	Turn left/right
A	Accelerate
	Brake
S / X	Gear up/down
1 / 2	Alter view
↓	Rear view
Z	Reverse
Left SHIFT	Tear offs

TEST DRIVE 4 (Electronic Arts)

We couldn't quite fit this on our 3D disc but thought you should see it again anyway. Race a Dodge Viper though England's green and pleasant land. The skies are filled with RAF test pilots and the roads are swamped by Sunday drivers – so look out.

Controls: Keyboard/joystick

↑↓	Accelerate/brake
←→	Steer left/right
	Brake
A / Z	Gears up/down
X	Horn (fnirk)
ESC	Pause
F1	Change view size
F2	Change view distance
F4	Change camera



G-POLICE (Psygnosis)

We're still wondering what the 'G' stands for, but while we ponder away the hours let's enjoy again another mission from last year's award-winning 3D blaster. In this new mission you have to find and destroy a bunch of droids who have gone rogue. The waypoint indicator shows your current mission objectives.

Controls: Keyboard/joystick/gamepad

↑←↓→	Pitch & roll
Right SHIFT	Forward thrust
Right CONTROL	Reverse thrust
Left CONTROL	Fire
Left ALT	Airbrake
A / Z	Weapon select
S / X	Hover up/down
C	Target lock
	View select
ESC	Pause

CART PRECISION RACING (Microsoft)

A new version of Microsoft's IndyCar sim that now includes two tracks and support for both force-feedback devices and Direct3D. There are a load more keys to get used to, which you can find by casting your eyes over the game's help file.

Controls: Keyboard/joystick/wheel

Num 4 / 6	Turn left/right
Num 8 / 2	Accelerate/brake
R	Reverse
\	Toggle mirrors
D	Toggle dashboard
M	Toggle map
O	Pit board
TAB	Pit page
F5	Racing line
F6	Steering help
F7	Auto shift
F8	Spin correction
F9	Auto brake
X	Crash damage
V	Switch camera
K	Next car

DEADLOCK 2: SHRINE WARS (Electronic Arts)

EA's futuristic strategy game will only last 15 turns, and features one single-player and a multi-player map for up to three players. It may look quite complicated at first but full instructions can be found in the How2play.txt file.

Controls: Keyboard/mouse

ENTER	End turn
	Army box of selected territory
SHIFT & INS	Toggle planet view
HOME	Toggle resource view
END	Toggle military view
TAB	Next territory
SHIFT & TAB	Previous territory
ESC	Delete disband unit/demolish building
F1	Help
F2	Game options
F3	Scenario status
F4	Buildings
F5	Pacts
F6	Event log
F7	Research
F8	Chat screen
F9	Taxes
F10	Morale status
F11	Black market
F12	Colony assistant
- / +	Zoom out/in
←→↑↓	Scroll map

SEGA TOURING CAR CHAMPIONSHIP (Sega)

Sega's touring car racer doesn't hold a candle to the recent Codemasters effort, but at least you can decide for yourself by tearing round the featured circuit at breakneck speed.

Controls: Keyboard/joystick

←→	Steering
↑↓	Gear shift up/down
X / Z	Accelerate/brake
S / D	Light accel/brake
V	Change view

ULTIM@TE RACE PRO

ACCELERATED RACING ACTION



Ultim@te Race Pro™ is REAL accelerated racing action! This is arcade car racing to push your 3-D accelerator card* to the max; producing dazzling graphically-superior effects such as sky reflections, mud spatters, sparks, skid marks, rain, thunderstorms and fog.

Ultim@te Race Pro™ is a high-speed, thrill-a-second ride against real live challengers (Internet, Network, Modem, Serial Link) or computer-controlled opponents; across 16 possible tracks in time trial, lap record or 'ghost' mode.

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CD-ROM

MICROPROSE

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WORMS II (Team 17/MicroProse)

This time-limited, single-level demo of the excellent grub-based strategy game enables two people to battle it out on a single machine or, with a connection to the Internet, a multi-player game via a server based in the US. Try it.

Controls: Keyboard/mouse

Mouse	Scroll landscape
L/mouse button	Select target
R/mouse button	Cancel weapon
←	Move left
→	Move right
ENTER	Jump/drop
ENTER ENTER	Back-jump
BACKSPACE	Vertical jump
↑	Aim up
↓	Aim down
[]	Drop weapon
[] (held)	Set strength
ESC	Quit
+ / -	Set bounce
1 - 5	Set fuse time
C	Centre worm
TAB	Next worm
R	Action replay
F1 - F12	Weapon shortcuts
DELETE	Cycle worm settings
INS	Cycle detail levels

NBA LIVE 98 (EA Sports)

What can we say – it's basketball, for heaven's sake. Anyone who doesn't know what to do should be exiled to some small Scottish island (if they're not already there) and be forced into making a living from carving trinkets from guano and selling it to American tourists.

Controls: Keyboard/gamepad

←→↑↓/ C B F V	Movement
ESC	Pause
CTRL / ALT	Pass/call for pass
R SHIFT /L SHIFT	Shoot/hand check/jump to rebound/block

SID MEIER'S GETTYSBURG (EA/Firaxis)

A new version of the Civil War real-time strategy game from the creator of *Civilization* and *Railroad Tycoon*. Three new scenarios are available as well as the original tutorials to teach you the mechanics of the game. May we suggest you read all the accompanying text files for detailed help on how to play the game.

Controls: Mouse/keyboard

REGIMENTAL COMMANDS:

C	Form column
L	Form line
S	Skirmishers
PG UP / HOME	Wheel right/left
W (+ mouse)	Wheel to cursor
A	Advance
SHIFT 1	Charge
H	Hold
Q	Double-quick
SHIFT 8	Attach
F	Fall back
R	Retreat
V	Volley
[]	Halt
SHIFT X	Detach from brigade
SHIFT /	Line of sight
G (+ mouse)	Don't stop
O (+ mouse)	Oblique

BRIGADE COMMANDS (ADDITIONAL):

B	Form battle formation
D	Form double line
M	Manoeuvre
R	Road
SHIFT X	Attach all regiments
SHIFT R	Rally troops
SHIFT , / .	Refuse line, left/right

BATTERY COMMANDS (ADDITIONAL):

C / L	Limber/unlimber
F	Fall back firing

GAME CONTROLS:

Z / X	Zoom in/out
SHIFT C	Centre map
P	Pause
+ / -	Speed up/slow down
ESC	Exit scenario
SHIFT L	Load
SHIFT S	Save
TAB	Next regiment
F1	Map
F2	Find fighting
F3	Find largest objective
F4	Last important point
F5	Scenario status
F6	Order of battle
F7	Courier messages
F8	Battle summary
F10	Options
J	Toggle trees/houses
K	Randomise enemy AI

GENOCIDE (Kaos Kontrol)

A new Windows 95 version of the *Abuse*-style demo we ran a couple of months back. Use the mouse to direct your fire, and the keyboard to move through the scrolling 2D world.

Controls: Mouse/keyboard

↑←↓→	Movement
Mouse	Targeting
LMB	Fire
RMB	Change weapon
Z / A	Zoom in/out

ARMORED MOON (Microforum)

This real-time strategy game takes an isometric view of a sci-fi world. Build an army of mechs and cyborgs and send them against the computer-controlled forces. There is a limit to how many units you can have, so take care when attacking the enemy not to leave your base open to attack.

Controls: Mouse/keyboard

F1	Help
F2	Save
F3	Load
F9	Mission briefing
F10	Options
TAB	Map toggle
←→↑↓	Scroll view
[]	Status
/	Arrange units in line
W	Arrange units in file
BACKSPACE	Halt units
A	Select all units on screen
G	Select all gun units in current selection
L	Laser units
M	Missile units
F	Flight units
P	Plasma units
C	Cyborg units
E	Supplier units
U	Deselect all units
	Control
1-9	Assign team
1-9	Select team

HD ZONE

PIRANHA PANIC

(Wihlborg Entertainment)

A rather snappy *Defender* clone, this. You control a single piranha out to save your eggs and kill all the jellyfish and barracuda. The scanner at the top tells you where your enemies are and there are power-ups to be picked up along the way.



Controls: Keyboard/joystick

←→↑↓	Movement
CTRL	Bite

ACTION SUPERCROSS

(Shareware)

With a title like *Action Supercross* you might expect a fast-paced racing game, in which case you could be a tad disappointed. Instead, why not prepare yourself for a platform/puzzle game on a slow bike. Intrigued? Course you are. So give it a go.



Controls: Keyboard

↑	Accelerate
↓	Block both wheels
←→	Turn bike
[]	Turn bike around

SPECIAL FEATURE

HARANGUING ON THE TELEPHONE

Who says we just make this stuff up? To supplement this month's feature (see page 64), here's living, breathing proof that Charlie Brooker did indeed speak to all those helpful people at Activision, BMG, Eidos and Virgin. Each file can be run from within the browser. Just click on the relevant icon, put your feet up and laugh hysterically at the poor beleaguered recipients of his wrath.

QUAKE II – 3.13 POINT RELEASE (iD Software)

They've taken their time about it and they should've been in the original release, but iD have finally got round to releasing the official multi-player levels that we've all been waiting for. The patch is a self-extracting file that will copy the relevant files to your Quake2 directory. When you next start the game, everything will automatically be set up and ready to go.

PATCHES

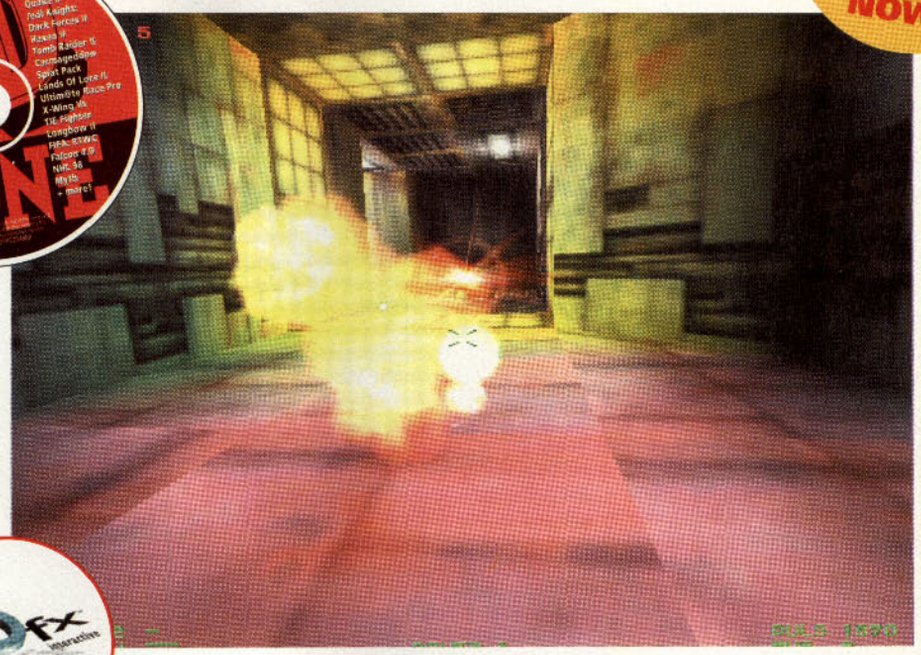
More of the latest upgrades, including *CM2* transfer updates and world league info as well as patches for *Lands Of Lore 2*, *Ultim@te Race Pro* and *Dark Reign*. Go to the /patches directory on the CD and choose the patch you want. Each file is either self-extracting or can be unzipped with WinZip – just specify where you want the files to go.

3D ZONE II

YOU DON'T NEED A 3D CARD TO PLAY, AND YOU CAN WIN ONE SIMPLY BY PLACING THE CD IN YOUR DRIVE! DO IT NOW!



If you've got a 3D accelerator card tucked away inside your PC, you're in for a real treat this month. We've scoured the globe for the latest and greatest demos, patches and drivers, and stuck them all on one easy-to-use CD. So what are you waiting for? Stick it into the drive and let's see what this baby can do...



WHETHER YOU HAVE A 3D ACCELERATOR card or not, there's more than enough on this month's second CD to keep you occupied well into the summer months. Depending on which card you own you'll be able to enjoy over 30 of the best demos currently available – including *Turok: Dinosaur Hunter, Tomb Raider II, Lands Of Lore II, X-Wing Vs TIE Fighter* and *Carmageddon Splat Pack* – that take advantage of the latest 3D card technology. We've also compiled as many of the latest patches that we could find and included the latest drivers for the most popular 3D cards.

If you haven't got a 3D card don't despair, you can still run many of the demos on this CD, and we're giving you the chance to win one of the latest next-generation cards as well as copies of the fabulous *Forsaken* and the awesome *Nightmare Creatures*. See right-hand column for further details.

DEMOS

To avoid any confusion, all the demos have been grouped by chipset rather than by card manufacturer. Simply click on the relevant tabs on the CD browser to see how many demos you can run. Direct3D is of course the name of Microsoft generic drivers that all 3D cards can utilise, so be sure to click this tab whatever card you own. The 3Dfx demos will run only on the Voodoo chipset, and we've made an effort to include as many of these as possible because this is by far the most popular type of card. We've also included a couple of native PowerVR and Rendition demos too. If your card uses this chipset, don't forget that you can also run all the D3D demos, but they won't look as nice!

If you haven't got a 3D card in your machine, check out the tab on the CD browser marked 'No 3D card' and you'll find 25 demos that will run in software mode. They obviously won't look as spectacular, but they're well worth a look nevertheless.





PATCHES

If you go to the /patches directory, you'll find a whole host of the latest patches available that will turn your old games into stunning works of art. Again, to keep things simple we've grouped them by chipset. Each directory contains either a self-extracting or zipped archive file that must be unpacked to the relevant game directory. You are strongly advised to check any of the accompanying readme files for correct intructions on correct installation procedures.

DRIVERS

Your video card(s) can't run without them, and quite often drivers get overwritten or even lost. We've done our best to compile all the latest drivers for all the major cards. To update or re-install new drivers, just select the one that matches the one in your card and double-click on the icon. Be sure to choose the right one though, otherwise odd things may happen to your machine.

WIN! ONE OF 40 STATE-OF-THE-ART 3D GRAPHICS CARDS!

Here's your big chance to win a next-generation 3D graphics card. This is what we've got to give away:

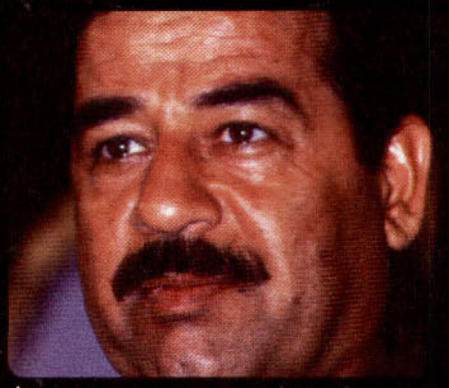
10 Creative Labs Voodoo 2 cards
10 Orchid Righteous 3D 2 cards
10 Maxi Gamer 3D 2 (Voodoo 2) cards
10 PowerVR Apocalypse 3DX cards

Additionally, the first 15 winners will each receive a copy of Acclaim's incredible 3D showcase *Forsaken*. We also have 10 copies of *Nightmare Creatures* to give away in conjunction with VideoLogic. This is a special competition which you can enter on-line simply by pointing your Web browser at VideoLogic's website: **www.powervrdirect.com.** When you visit this site you will see a flashing button bearing the legend '*PC Zone* 3D competition'. Double-click this button and you will find a competition to complete. Winners will be notified in a forthcoming issue of the magazine.

Follow these instructions to find out if you've won our cover CD competition:

1. Place the 3D ZONE disc in your CD-ROM drive.
2. Run the 3dzone2.exe file either from the run command or by double-clicking on the icon in Windows Explorer.
3. Click on the Competition tab on the browser, and have ready the serial number which you'll find on the back of the CD box.
4. Simply key it in then click 'Go' to see if you've won. Good luck!

DISCLAIMER: *PC Zone* **cannot accept any responsibility for the loss or damage of data through using this CD. Editors decision is final. All usual compo rules apply.**



*























*

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THE FACE OF MODERN WAR.

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BULLETIN

Heart of the matter

DATAPAD

Now you see it, now you don't. Now you'll see it some time this summer. Probably.

SLIPPAGE CENTRAL

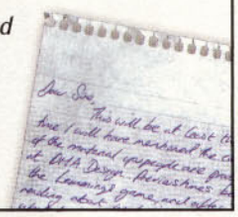
Which games have slipped, and when they've slipped to.



PAGE 16

SPECIAL REPORT

Well-balanced, intelligent *Grand Theft Auto* feedback...



PAGE 23

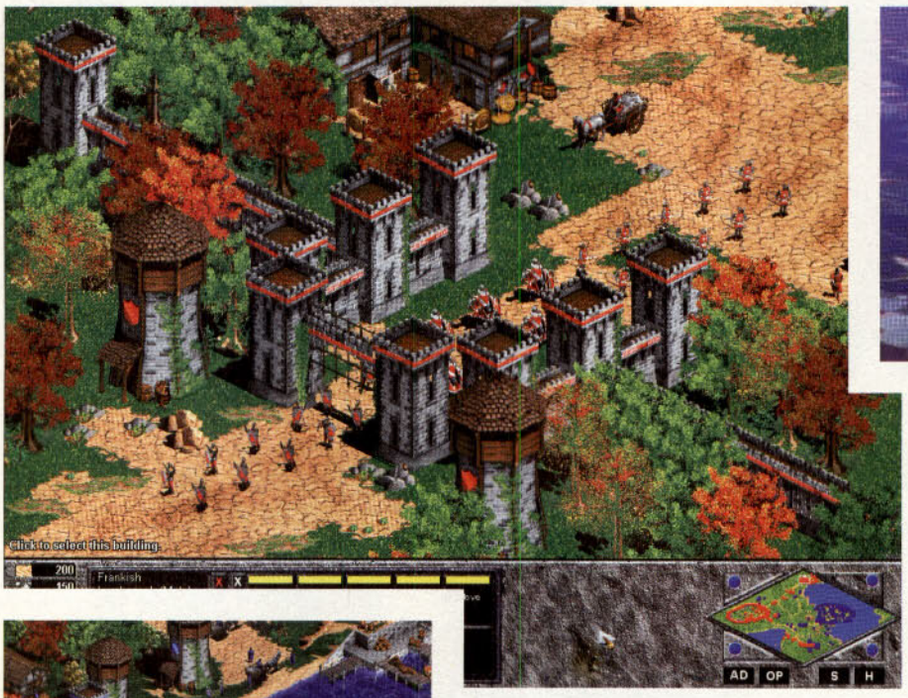
HOTSHOTS

Psst... Want to see the very first in-game *Carmageddon II* shots?



PAGE 26

Microsoft Gamestock '98





(Left) *Age Of Empires 2* boasts bigger buildings and enhanced graphics. (Above) *Spitfire*: at last, *Flight Sim* with guns.



First news is just coming in of Microsoft's new games line-up...

***Age Of Empires* has surprised many by** becoming one of the best-selling strategy games ever. It comes as a surprise to no one, then, that hopes are high in the Microsoft camp for *Age Of Empires 2* when it arrives at the end of this year.

On the evidence of what we've seen at Gamestock '98 (Microsoft's own games conference), *Age Of Empires 2* retains everything that was so addictive about the first game and adds many new features of its own. Chief among these new developments is a greatly enhanced graphics engine which allows for huge buildings lovingly crafted in 16-bit colour. The AI has been massively improved too, so gamers can now choose formations for their units, in addition to determining how aggressive or passive they are in battle.

Personally, we'd like to see an improved campaign with linked on-going battle scenarios. Ensemble (the developers) have not ruled this out, and this feature may well appear in the end product. We'll give you more news on this as we get it.

Flight sim fans are in for a treat with the release of *Spitfire*, a World War II combat sim that uses the highly sophisticated *Flight Simulator 98* flight engine. *Flight Sim* with guns is something that propeller heads have been crying out for ever since the *FS* series began, and Microsoft are confident this new addition to the *FS* stable will give the product broader appeal. Microsoft hope to have *Spitfire* in the shops by the end of the year.

Finally, *Motorcross Madness* is an absolutely fab-looking stunt driving and racing game which uses D3D to better effect than any game we've seen so far. We'll give you more news on this promising racer next issue. For more details on any of these games, call Microsoft 0345 002000.



D3D comes of age with *Motorcross Madness*.

The 'it' in question is *Heart Of Darkness*, the oft-delayed cinematic platformer from the French blokes at Amazing Studios. The game, which tells the tale of one boy's quest to rescue his beloved pooch from the other-worldly clutches of The Dark Souls, could quite possibly prove to be the most advanced traditional platform game to date. When you consider the thousands of frames of traditional 2D animation, pre-rendered backdrops, and around half an hour of cinematic storytelling sequences which seamlessly link to the action, you'll appreciate why *Heart Of Darkness* has been in production longer than any other game ever.

Keep 'em peeled for later this year when *Heart Of Darkness* is coughed out via Ocean Software.



Can you stomach it?

Indigestion? Use new, all-improved *Settlers III* – with its best ever formula – to tackle those intolerable gut-rot problems...



Hang on, this should be about German developers Blue Byte Software, who've recently announced a sequel to *Settlers II* – the aptly titled *Settlers III* – when we were in fact expecting another *Settlers* add-on/cash-in next (*Settlers Titanium*, anyone?). The next instalment in this popular God-sim series is scheduled for a September release and will boast new enhanced, rendered graphics (the screenshots look incredibly bare, but Blue Byte tell us there's still some way to go with the interface), on-line support with a dedicated UK server, and an all-new combat system. So maybe this time round you'll have at least a modicum of control over your troops.

The game's mixture of economical, industrial and military manoeuvring has made it a perennially popular pansy in the overgrown garden that is the real-time strategy gaming genre. One can only hope that enough time and energy is spent unlocking the potential of the on-line aspects of this game as well as keeping the lone player happy. Check **www.bluebyte.com** for further details.

The return of Turok



Take a look at these hot new shots of Acclaim's forthcoming *Turok 2* and be prepared to stand back in amazement. Following on from where the previous game left off, *Turok 2* will again feature a roaming Indian with an arsenal of hi-tech weaponry and a bone to pick with the local wildlife.



Endangered species or not, get in Turok's sights and you're dead meat.

Not expected until late on in the year, *Turok 2* will take advantage of the next generation of 3D accelerator cards and will give the player a wider field of vision (ie less fog) so as not to feel as claustrophobic as in the first game.

Hopefully we'll see a rich arsenal of new weaponry and more taxing puzzles than the first instalment had, although Acclaim have yet to confirm exactly what they plan to have in it. More details soon.



Bricks in space

Fans of System Three's quirky resource management game *Constructor* are likely to be both excited and bemused by news of a sequel. *Constructor II*, as it is inevitably known, looks set to retain all the left-field humour of the original... but within a completely different environment – the barren plains of an alien planetoid.

Quite how this geographical shift will affect the gameplay is unclear at present, although it seems likely that out and out conflict with a race of malevolent, xenomorphic aliens will form a large part of the equation, leading to plenty of thrillsome humans-versus-the-critters action. The overall feel is still resolutely tongue in cheek, with the dope-addled hippies of the original title making a welcome reappearance alongside ticklesome newcomers such as the Alien Egg, a walking embryo which impregnates its victims, subsequently causing their guts to burst open all over the carpet. More information as and when we get it.



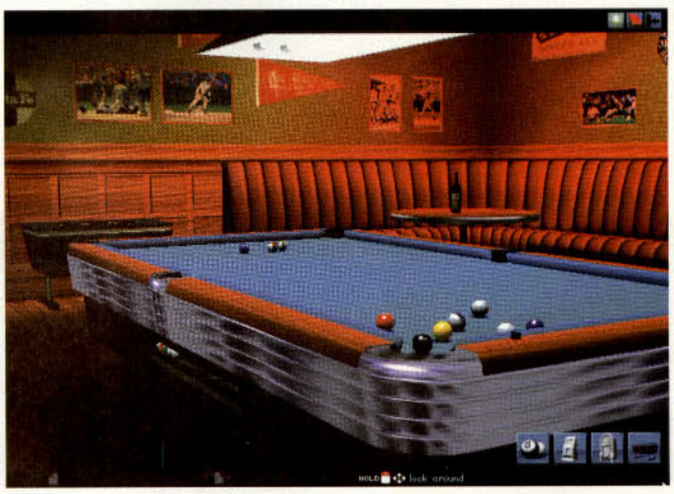
Archer of Loaf

Maclean develops Awesome new game.

Oral hygiene magnate – and the man behind such classic (old) games as *Dropzone*, *IK+* and *Jimmy White's Snooker* – Archer Maclean has a new company, modestly entitled Awesome Developments. Their first attempt to rid you of cash is to be called *Jimmy White's 2: Cueball.*

Effectively, *Jimmy White's 2: Cueball* is a slob 'em up simulating idle pursuits. Wandering around like a fool, the player can stroll between such disparate areas as a 19th century Edwardian games room and a 1950s American pool bar. Each room comes equipped with a snooker or pool table, as well as an array of fully playable sub-games, including the original *Dropzone*, and even a rudimentary replication of darts. Further home comforts come in the form of a remote-controlled TV, a programmable CD player and an adjustable fire.

Jimmy White's 2: Cueball is released in September.



DATAPAD

Meet Marathon

Plans for a 48-hour gaming marathon, called Fusion '98, have just been announced by the team that was responsible for The Gathering (see previous report in the Christmas edition of *PC Zone*). The event – the largest LAN party ever held – takes place over the weekend of April 11 and 12 at The Queen's Hotel in Leeds, kicking off at 10am on the Saturday morning and continuing non-stop until Sunday evening.

"We're gonna have around 300 PCs networked. There'll be huge knockout one-on-one, two-on-two and Clan tournaments, as well as a *Quake* server running permanently outside of tournament time," organiser Paul Younger told us.

More information and registration details at **http://fusion98.reality-x.co.uk/**.

SLIPPAGE CENTRAL

An at-a-glance look at games with changed release dates...

Game	Slipped to
Daikatana (Eidos)	September
Fighter Squadron (Activision)	September
Grand Prix Legends (Cendant)	September
Populous III (Bullfrog)	September
Sensible Soccer World Cup 98 (GT)	May
SiN (Activision)	May



Now September: Ion Storm's *Daikatana*. *PC Zone* is still waiting for an explanation...

Babylon 5-knuckle shuffle

At last, the suspense, mystery and twisting storylines of *Babylon 5* are heading to the PC.



Cendant Software (formerly Sierra On-line UK) hope to complete a 3D space combat simulation based on the *Babylon 5* universe – complete with paranoid aliens, weird-looking spacecraft and hundreds of worlds – by the autumn.

Reflecting the series, the single-player game will centre around a deviously concocted plot, while multi-player games are planned as more of a cosmic shoot 'em up-type fracas. Needless to say: Origin – watch out.

Scheduled to reach us some time in October, *Babylon 5 Space Combat Simulation (Inspired name – Ed)* will blend the talents of Netter Digital (the special effects team for the series) with Cendant's own in-house programming eggheads, complete with an in-game score supplied by Christopher Franke (the show's music composer).

All in all, it's a potent mix of talent that should be more than capable of expanding the space shoot 'em up genre into something more expansive and believable than it is at the moment.

Dominate ADF



Gonzo independent programming team Game Tool Technologies have put together a handy little application for DID's news page-dominating *F-22 ADF*. Previously, *ADF*'s only real flaw was that there was no user-customisability in the missions. Now, via GTT, you can download *Air Combat Designer*, a complete mission editor, completely free of charge.

ACD lets you set up and fly your own *F-22* scenarios, altering everything from weapon parameters to mission goals. There's also the option to jump into the cockpit of something other than the F-22, but in such cases only the look of the plane will be changed.

Grab the software from **www.gttweb.com** and get cracking.

Burning bright

Top golfer Tiger Woods and sports sim specialists EA Sports have teamed up to produce the next in the *PGA Tour Golf* series, *Tiger Woods & The PGA Tour*. Promising to have a hand in the game's development, Woods said he was "thrilled to join the EA Sports team".

Coming as it does during something of a low spot in the young golfer's form, expect to see his trademark power drives, distinctive celebrations and inadequate attempts at ball control faithfully reproduced in the new game. Whether his comically moustachioed coach will also appear is still uncertain.

One interesting fact about the deal is that to obtain the Tiger Woods licence, EA had to go through footwear manufacturer Nike, which effectively 'owns' the young golfer.

It's a funny old world...



Free Incubation add-on

Blue Byte are so pleased with the following that *Incubation* seems to have gathered that they plan to release an add-on pack of new levels in celebration. And... *and*... AND... it'll be completely FREE inside every copy of *Incubation* from March onwards.

The Hidden Worlds, as it is to be called, will contain seven missions previously available only via the Internet, and three brand new ones never before seen in the UK. Blue Byte are doing this to "demonstrate just how much we appreciate the loyalty of our customers".

Existing *Incubation* owners who have already filled out their registration cards will qualify for a copy of the disc via their postal system. Now isn't that just dandy?



ACTIVISION

Activision presents the new **Double Vision** offer

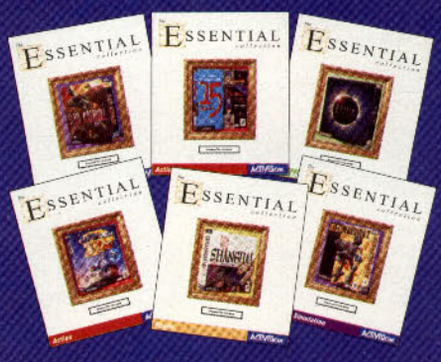
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DATAPAD

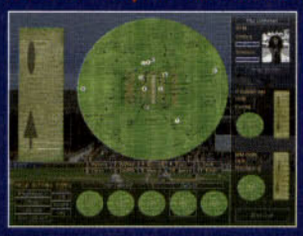
Punk to funk

Activision are putting the finishing touches to *Interstate '76: Nitro Riders*. As previously reported, it will be a standalone expansion pack set previous to the original game. Players will tackle over 20 new missions set across 1970s America. As well as some serious new grooves, the game will also feature nine new cars and six new weapons in addition to those from the first game. The old graphics have been given a serious overhaul, and we can expect full 3D and force-feedback support – all for under a cool £20. Check out **www.activision.com** or watch out for a full review next month.



Empirical evidence

Empire Interactive have a lengthy list of stuff on the way in the next few months.





(Left) Rub dirt into your balls in *International Cricket Captain*. (Right) 'Hex is sex' – how's that for an *Operational Art Of War* tag line?

In the spring we'll see *International Cricket Captain*. You can manage a County or Test side, pick tactics, sign top overseas players (obviously you can only do the latter at Test level if you control England), slag people off in the press before an important game and bring out a tedious, self-serving book about your time in charge when you're sacked.

The Operational Art Of War is a huge new wargame from Norm Koger (ex-SSI stalwart/legend) which enables you to play through every major battle between 1939 and 1955. It has 12 standard scenarios and a map and scenario editor, and should be very good.

Tribal Rage is Talonsoft's cartoony looking, tongue-in-cheek real-time strategy game set in the future, boasting LAN and Internet play. And later in the summer comes *Apache Havoc*, a gorgeous-looking chopper sim that lets you pit two of the nastiest combat helicopters around head to head. The hard-core sim boasts four huge combat zones, dynamic campaigns, "real weather", highly detailed terrain, and even some carrier-based missions. (That's carrier as in aircraft, not Robert, cookery fans.)



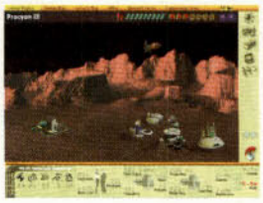


(Above right) An in-game shot from *Apache Havoc*. Look out for more shots next issue. (Above) Another real-time strategy game: *Tribal Rage*.

A nation of stars

***Star Nations*, by Megamedia, could be the kind of space adventure that** would make you want to retire on a distant planet when you're finally sick to death of the one you currently reside on. Such is its promise.

In true *Elite* fashion, the player will be able to mould their destiny as either Entrepreneur, Adventurer, Crusader or just plain old Administrator *(Who'd want a bloody desk job in a game like this? – Ed)*. On top of this, there'll also be a chance to choose the 'right-wing' approach, to the point where whole civilisations can be led into galactic war with each other.



Megamedia also tell us that *Star Nations* will have glorious 3Dfx battle scenes, constantly fluctuating planet economies, and so many multi-player possibilities it'll make your brain implode.

Did you know?



Three stories from simulation and update patch specialists DID. The good news is that their next flight sim will be a civil aviation effort called *X-Plane*, based on a Macintosh title (pictured here) which they encountered at an American air show last year. The original game featured innovative features such as real-time satellite weather information, and so impressed with the concept were DID that they signed a deal with the game's creator to use it as the framework for their own title.

The bad news is that the promised extension for *F-22 ADF, Total Air War*, now doesn't look like it's going to be out until autumn.

Finally, back to the good news: *F-22 ADF* recently scooped Best Simulation *and* Best Game prizes at the recent Milia d'Or (our version of the Cannes Film Festival) – a first for any simulation. So congratulations to them.

More Worms II

Recommended a couple of issues ago, *Worms II* is currently one of the best multi-player, close-combat action games available for the PC. The game will no doubt make even more of an impact in April this year when *The Night Missions* – a new mission pack featuring new weapons and terrain and a special single-player 'adventure' scenario – arrives in the shops, priced £9.99.

The new single-player mode enables exploration of side-scrolling levels (à la *Super Metroid*, and *Super Contra* on the SNES) and will be played in real time. There will also be a special Ninja Rope Arena (complete with unlimited use) for players who want to perfect their swinging skills.



New weapons available include flame-thrower, experimental laser (which can sometimes blow up in your face), head-butt and the devastating Chinese burn. Another added bonus will be the inclusion of controllable vehicles such as tanks, jeeps, fixed guns and helicopters.

Road tank racing

If a deranged gynaecologist/programmer decided to knock out a game about women's bits, you'd no doubt raise an eyebrow or two – like we did when news of this game first came in. Naturally, it came as a disappointment to discover that *S40 Racing* is actually about racing Volvos *(Ahem – Ed)*. Programmed by a splinter group from the talent working on Gremlin's forthcoming *Motorhead*, *S40 Racing* contains ideas that were originally going to be incorporated into *Motorhead* but were deemed worthy of a game of their own. There will be a choice of tracks and built-like-tank-style cars, plus some sensational speed blur and lighting effects courtesy of 3D acceleration.



It's gonna be big



Unsigned Californian software team CounterActive are currently developing their all-new, non-linear, first-person shoot 'em up-cum-role-player, *Jquan*. The *Jquan* game world looks set to be almost Titanic in scope, with numerous campaigns, each having between five and 20 missions (levels up to 32 million cubic feet in size are also possible using their engine – didn't we say it was going to be big?). We're also assured that *Jquan* will contain a fully dynamic 3Dfx world with 24-bit colour graphics, multi-player and on-line gameplay support, fully interactive 3D and ultra-realistic explosions.

Once a UK distributor has been secured for *Jquan* we'll bring you an update. Until then, for more information keep an eye on **www.counteractive.com**.

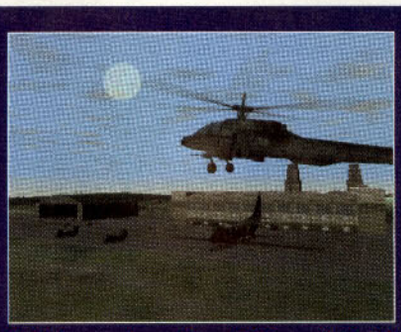
Look out, Longbow

NovaLogic have announced that the classic helicopter 'sim' *Comanche 3* is to be reintroduced to the world via *Comanche Gold*. The core of the game hasn't really changed, but the player has been provided with several new environments, new campaigns, improved wingman AI and a working Win 95 front end. Sadly no 3Dfx or other accelerator card is on offer, but NovaLogic have hinted that their existing graphics engine is being put down and that from now on their games will have 3D support.

The most welcome news though is that *Comanche Gold* will now be compatible with the surprisingly excellent Novaworld.net Internet gaming service. Previously, only *F-22 Raptor* pilots have been able to take advantage of the service. Whether the two games will be cross-compatible or not has yet to be confirmed.



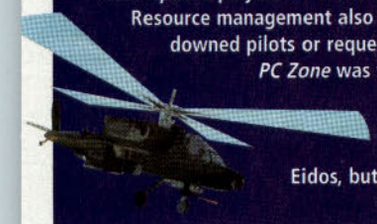
Nish, clish and bang



Alright, so we know it was MC Tunes that said it. But it could have been Apache Indian.

Before rushing to buy a copy of the excellent *Longbow 2*, flight sim fans might just want to hold out and wait to see how *Team Apache*, the new chopper sim from Simis, turns out. Featuring two innovative campaigns (in real time, no less), *Team Apache* players will have to be a pretty quick, not only during the missions but also in between them. Resource management also makes an appearance, as commanders will have to decide whether to rescue downed pilots or request new ones.

PC Zone was treated to a sneak peek at how the game was coming along, and we were impressed not only by the graphics but also by the beefy sounds. The game was made even more playable with a new 'floating trail' camera and a decent 3D virtual cockpit. *Team Apache* was due to be published by Eidos, but Mindscape have snatched it up and hope to have it in the shops by July.





Brian and Colin

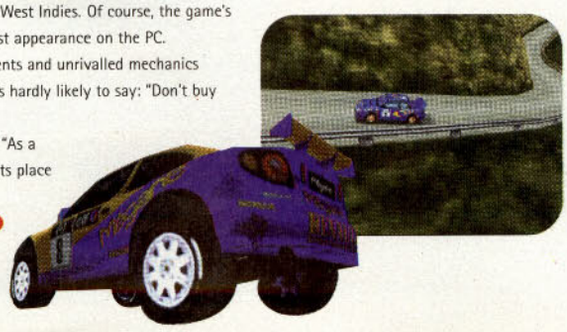
Codemasters announce a brace of sportsman-endorsed games.

Warwickshire-based publishers Codemasters didn't have to look far to secure a big name for their cricket game, procuring the services of Brian Lara, captain of the aforementioned county and also of the West Indies. Of course, the game's been knocking around for years, but *Brian Lara Cricket '98* will be its first appearance on the PC.

"*Brian Lara Cricket* '98 will feature some inspiring graphic environments and unrivalled mechanics of play," said Codies Managing Director Nick Wheelwright. But then he's hardly likely to say: "Don't buy it, it's rubbish," is he?

Colin McCrae Rally is also fairly self-explanatory. Said Wheelwright: "As a motorsport enthusiast, I can promise that *Colin McCrae Rally* will take its place as the most realistic, thrilling and wholly playable rally game in 1998."

Both games are expected to arrive sometime during the summer.



HOT Line

Tracking the hottest games and their current release dates

TIMELINE

APRIL
- Incoming (Rage)
- ST: First Contact (MicroProse)
- Unreal (GT Interactive)

MAY
- Descent: FreeSpace (Interplay)
- EBT Tank (DID)
- Half-Life (Sierra)
- SiN (Activision)

JUNE
- The Dark Project (Eidos)
- Duke Nukem 4 Ever (GT Interactive)
- Falcon 4.0 (MicroProse)
- FIFA: World Cup 98 (EA Sports)

JULY
- Blood II (Monolith)

AUGUST
- Evolva (Psygnosis)
- Prey (GT Interactive)

SEPTEMBER
- Championship Manager 3 (Eidos)
- Civilization III (MicroProse)
- Daikatana (Eidos)
- Earthsiege 3 (Sierra)
- Grand Prix Legends (Sierra)
- Populous III (EA)

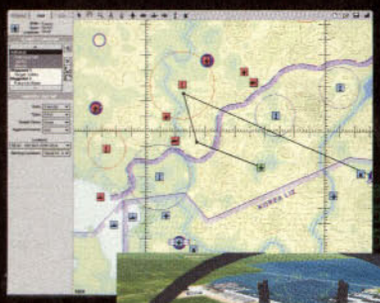
OCTOBER
- Age Of Empires II (Microsoft)
- Alpha Centauri (EA)
- Blade (Gremlin)
- Gabriel Knight III (Sierra)
- Settlers III (Blue Byte)

NOVEMBER
- Carmageddon II (SCi)
- Constructor II (Acclaim)
- F1GP3 (MicroProse)
- Grim Fandango (LucasArts)
- Messiah (Interplay)
- RPG (Gremlin)
- Ultima IX (EA)

DECEMBER
- Anachronox (Ion Storm)
- Diablo II (Blizzard)
- Dungeon Keeper 2 (EA)
- Total Annihilation II (GT Interactive)

come fry with me









3Dfx Screen shot

HIGH-REALISM STRIKE FIGHTE

F/A-18 KOREA follows on from the highly successful and ultra realistic FA/18 Hornet and takes the term simulation to the extreme. With the excellent gameplay and exceptional realism of Hornet, Korea also brings with it outstanding graphics.

KEY FEATURES:

- Three theatres of operation, all featuring rolling 3D terrain and atmospheric effects.
- Accurate flight dynamics closely simulate the Navy and marine strike fighter aircraft.
- Exceptionally detailed avionics are closely modelled to provide accurate reproductions of the FA/18 Korea flight systems.
- Unique graphic engine delivers fast and smooth in-game graphics, even on an unaccelerated PC.
- Superior 3D graphics capabilities including Native 3Dfx Glide support for the finest accelerated 3D graphic effects available.

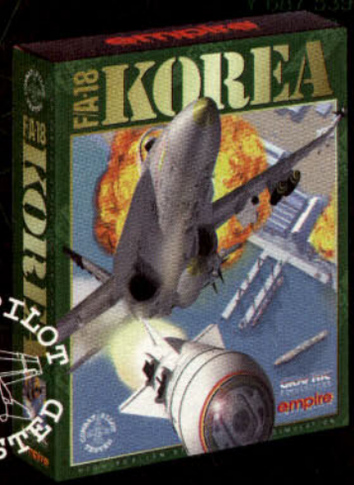
For product information and availability, check out our web page at: **www.empire.co.uk**



IMULATION

- European version includes an extra 18 missions which are not included in the US version.
- Advanced mission editor provides design control over all available units within the Korean theatre.
- Connect up to 4 computers via network for multiple player action. Includes 6 network missions designed to enhance multi-player play.
- Huge arsenal includes B-57 Tactical Nuke.
- Standard product includes full Pilot's Manual written by a former Marine 'Strike-U' instructor and FA/18 Hornet pilot.
- New aircraft types and anti-aircraft units, including F-14D Tomcat, B2 Spirit, Patriot, Hawk and various SA-2 variants.
- Exclusive multimedia training classroom provides over 90 minutes of flight combat instruction. Includes 6 training missions in scenic Hawaii.
- New network theatre set in Fallon, Nevada.
- Tested by Combat Pilots.

GRAPHIC SIMULATIONS CORPORATION



COMBAT PILOT TESTED

WINDOWS '95/NT 4.0, 3Dfx® GRAPHICS REQUIRE 3Dfx-BASED GRAPHICS ACCELERATOR.

empire® INTERACTIVE

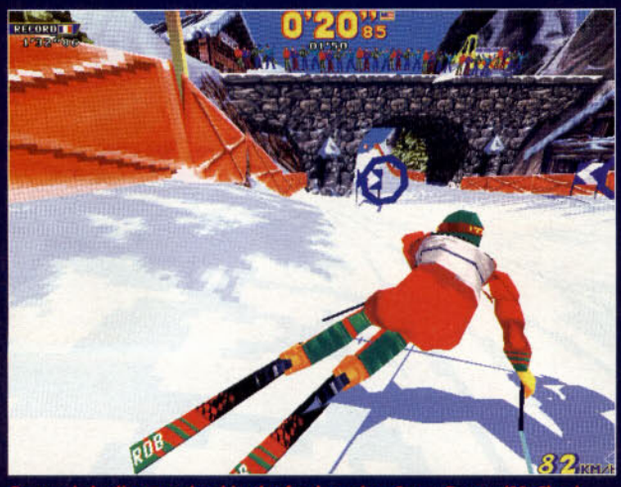
DATAPAD

A league of their own

EA Sports will mark the start of the 1998 US baseball season by releasing *Triple Play '99*, with play that is fluid and spectacular enough to attract both newcomers and experienced hitters to climb on board the baseball bandwagon. There'll be statistics by the shedload; fully controllable motion captured players that dive, slide, catch and even have their own pitching styles; unique stadium realism; off-the-wall throws and match highlights. *Triple Play '99* will be released this spring.



Taking the piste



Gouraud shading overload in the forthcoming *Snow Racers '98*. Check out the 'sheen' on this racer's arse cheeks. Attention to detail, or what?

Because The Forces Of Evil tell us so, snowboarding is a "cool" sport. You need only to look at snowboarders themselves for the proof – those blond-haired, shade-wearing pretty boys have seemingly taken over from Wolf out of *Gladiators* as every young man's role model.

Ocean Software are keen to exploit the inexplicable popularity of snowboarding – and, indeed, skiing – with the impending release of *Snow Racers '98*.

Though the game will feature all this year's real-life board and ski ranges, the 15 huge slopes are unflinchingly over-the-top. Near-vertical drops, impossible leaps and 20 of the most improbable stunts ever seen are just part of the fun. The non-linear slopes also enable you to go off-piste, and slide wherever you damn well please. *Snow Racers '98* looks set to be, as they say on the slopes, "gnarly, dude". Z

More Moto Racing



French adventure-pioneers Delphine are currently working on *Moto Racer 2*, the sequel to last year's fun-but-dumb dirt bike racer.

Details are pretty scarce at the moment, but *PC Zone* can exclusively *assume* that there'll be a few new bikes, a fair number of new tracks and maybe – *just maybe* – a few new surprises. The shots we've seen reveal some quite imaginative design features, including variable weather conditions. Delphine are hoping to support the next generation of 3D spooge cards and have set a release date for the middle of the summer.

For more details go to **http://ourworld.compuserve.com/homepages/ramal/dsi_uk.htm.** Z

Flanker version two



Proving that Russian technology isn't just limited to erroneous space stations, Eagle Dynamics have announced the sequel to the highly popular *Su-27 Flanker*. Scheduled for a November release, *Su-27 Flanker v2.0* will offer plenty of enhancements over the first game, most notably decent 3D-accelerated graphics. It will also boast a hyper-accurate flight model (that responds to the effects of mid-flight damage), an 'intelligent' campaign model and the use of actual Russian satellite imagery for ultra-realistic terrain data. The usual array of networking and Internet options will also be on offer, including what's described as a unique messaging system for pilot-to-pilot chatter. Let's just hope it's in English this time... Z



Drowned God killed Kennedy



The moon landings were actually filmed in Neil Armstrong's back garden. The Gulf War was orchestrated by Steven Spielberg upon the behest of George Bush. Marilyn Monroe was murdered by Kid Creole and his Coconuts... Popular conspiracy theories all of them, but small potatoes in comparison with the epic paranoia at the heart of Ocean's *Drowned God*.

According to this time and dimension-spanning adventure, all of human history is a lie. The question is: who orchestrated the lie, and why? And – guess what – it'll be your job to find out.

Designed by the author Harry Horse (whoever he is. A friend of Mickey Mouse, perhaps?), *Drowned God* will be aiming for 'number one with a magic bullet' sometime real soon. Z

Full-on blaster

Based around an engine that supports 3Dfx, 32-bit colour and real-time shadowing and lighting, *Raven Of Darkness* is one of a new breed of games enabling incredibly high-resolution images at incredibly fast frame rates. If you're looking for an old-fashioned, console-style single-player blaster, then Chaotic claim you should look no further. The development team champion their game's single-player slant too: "*Raven* focuses mainly on the single-player aspect of the action genre, with a more robust game design tailored to meet single-player needs."
Well, that philosophy certainly worked for LucasArts' *Mysteries Of The Sith* (see review on page 72).

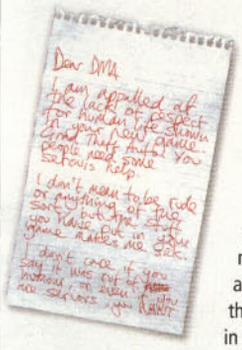


ZONE PC ZONE SPECIAL REPORT!!!

The FILTH and the FURY!



DMA Design's *Grand Theft Auto* has been popular with gamers everywhere – and a *cause celebre* for self-appointed moral guardians to boot. Since the game was released last Christmas, an unstoppable flood of outraged letters, e-mails and abusive phone calls has been flooding into the Dundee developers' office. In this special report, Charlie Brooker, himself no stranger to protesting mail, picks out some of the jucier communications.



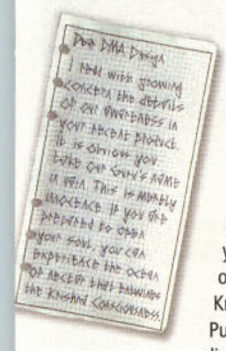
Fire and brimstone

I am appalled at the lack of respect for human life shown in your new game *Grad Theft Auto* [sic]. You people need some serouis [sic] help. I don't mean to be rude or anything of the sort, but the stuff that you have put in your game makes me sick.

I don't care if you say it was out of humour, or even if you are serious, you WANT to run people down in your cars??? That's STUPID! If you know anything about your bible or Chritianty [sic] then you know that the God wants us to respect ALL human life. You are totally messed up. Don't play with issues like peoples' lives because you will BURN IN HELL. That's all I have to say to you.

Concerened with your beleifs [sic]

CB sez: Would there be any point in mentioning that IT'S ONLY A GAME? Thought not. Good job abysmal spelling and clumsy prose isn't a sin, though, eh?



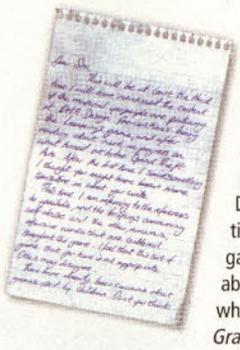
Join us... join us...

I read with growing concern the details of our awareness contained in your recent product. It is obvious you take our Guru's name in vain. This is merely innocence. If you are prepared to open your soul, you can experience the ocean of nectar that entwines the Krishna Consciousness.

Purge yourselves. Follow the divine path. Recall the voidist items. Put your hard work to good use in aiding the transcendental movement of His Divine Grace AC Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, spiritual master of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness. Our Lord will aid you in your task.

Gregory Peter Donald

The fundamentalist Christians could learn something from this approach: disapproval, forgiveness and an outstretched hand – all in one handy and faultlessly polite package. I mean, it's enough to make you think twice before running 'em over. Isn't it?



XXX sex horror shock

This will be at least the third time I have mentioned the content of the material you people are producing at DMA Design. Previous times being the *Lemmings* game and after reading about work in progress on what turned out to be *Grand Theft Auto*. After the last time I said something, I thought you might have been more sensitive in what you write.

This time I am referring to the references to genitals, and the briefings concerning self-abuse and the other numerous offensive words that are scattered throughout the game. I feel that this sort of game is not appropriate. Others may disagree.

There have already been concerns about games used by children. Don't you think that this also applies to you? Also, just because people use this language in real life does not make it compulsory here – so please be more careful.



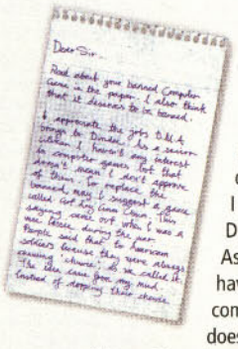


I hope you get the message of what I am trying to say and that I will not feel the need to comment on this again. I would like to ask you to keep what you produce at DMA free from mention of explicit illegal sexual practices as normal or acceptable even in jest, and from mention of other sexual practices if you can possibly manage it.

If you understand the principle of what I am saying – which I hope you will – you will also exclude implied sexual innuendo in your work. I'm sure there are plenty of other ways that you could try to be funny. If, however, this sort of thing continues, I feel I will be required to make an official complaint to the government, which I do not want to have to do.

"G"

The government, eh? He is serious. Hands up everyone who thinks "G" also sounds a little obsessed and frustrated. Listen here: it's alright, Gary, you can touch it if you like. We can tell you want to. It won't fall off or explode... and God won't strike you down or put hairs on your palms. Promise. Incidentally, what on earth upset you about Lemmings*? The lashings of in-game hard-core pornographic sex?*



Och aye, during the war...

Read about your banned computer game in the paper. I also think that it deserves to be banned.

I appreciate the jobs DMA brings to Dundee. As a senior citizen I haven't any interest in computer games, but that doesn't mean I don't approve of them. To replace the banned game, may I suggest a game called *Got Any Gum Chum*. This saying came out when I was a wee lassie during the war. People said that to American soldiers because they were always chewing 'chewie', as we called it. The idea I have in mind is instead of dropping their chewie on the ground, which I think has become a dirty game, how about dropping it in a bin? There is a chewie bin outside the City Chambers – very inconspicuous it is, too.

How about adding *Play The Tunie* by disposing of chewie the Cleanie Way. Please do think about this idea of mine. I won't say what my name is, but all the best in the future.

Ada MacDougal, Dundee

Further proof that hopeless but endearing dottiness is a veritable art form among little old ladies. A game revolving around the orderly disposal of chewing gum by US servicemen stationed in Dundee during the Second World War? Now there's *an idea with 'legs'...*

Note

All the letters printed here are 100 per cent genuine, although names have been changed to protect the individuals involved. It's only right and proper.



DATAPAD

More trouble on the roads

A new *Carmageddon* clone from Megamedia is due out this summer. *Outlaw Racers* features a 16 square kilometre world that's randomly generated depending on the player's handicap. The environment will not only include beautiful scenic tracks, but also busy inner-city streets. Multiple lanes (up to six) mean that you can throw six vicious-looking cars into the oncoming traffic at once, so carnage shouldn't be hard to come by. Traffic lights, police and innocent Sunday drivers should guarantee some gleefully hateful fun, and there's the facility to sling up to eight deathmatch players into an arena at one time.



THE MAN WHO KNOWS



Incorporating *Pie News Monthly.*

Bill Gates has been hit in the face with a pie. In a scene reminiscent of *Tiswas*, the Microsoft magnate came under attack from at least four assailants wielding cream-filled pastry projectiles. The incident happened in Belgium as Gates was entering a government building, and appears to have been a carefully planned ambush. The world's richest man emerged from the custard offensive caked in cream but otherwise unharmed. One person was arrested, although the actual culprit legged it. A possible suspect is Belgian entertainer **Noel Godin**, who has gained notoriety by tossing pies into the faces of well-known celebrities, the underlying message being that the pie could just as easily be a gun.

The pastry embarrassment came only days after **Microsoft** made some headway in resolving the so-called 'browser wars'. Accused of monopolising the market – and facing a million dollars per day fine – they finally relinquished and agreed to allow computer manufacturers that license Windows 95 to delete the offending **Internet Explorer**. However, in the wake of the deal, no major manufacturers have actually taken up the option to ship their computers without Internet Explorer 4 pre-installed. The issue is also set to re-emerge when **Windows 98** arrives, as the browser will be more tightly integrated into the new operating system.

More censorship news arrives from **Florida**, where two politicians have drafted the **Children's Protection from Violence Act**. The act, co-sponsored by Florida State senator **John Grant** and State representative **Barry Silver**, will attempt to regulate violent game content in public places such as arcades by forbidding access to anyone aged under 18. It could also have repercussions for software retailers, who would face problems when displaying games such as *Quake II* or *Carmageddon*. Violence is defined in the act as "the depiction or representation of death or severe injury, including but not limited to: 1) Decapitation; 2) Dismemberment; 3) Repeated instances of bloodshedding; or 4) Grotesque cruelty, in a way such that the depiction or representation shocks the conscience of the community and exceeds the boundaries of what should be tolerated in a civilised society".

Which brings me neatly onto ***Mortal Kombat***. Having already spawned a dreadful animated series, a one-hit CD, a risible live event tour, a lacklustre toy line, a dour animated video and a brace of cheesy films, the established mutilate 'em up is set to be converted to the small screen in the form of a live-action show. A joint venture between **Warner Brothers Domestic Television** and **New Line Television**, the series will follow the adventures of **Kung Lao** and his compatriots as they protect the earth from other-worldy villains – by kicking them hard about the face and neck and slapping them upside the head. **Scott Carlin** of Warner Brothers babbled: "Beyond being one of the most recognisable and engaging brands in entertainment, *Mortal Kombat* is a dazzling visual spectacle ideally suited to stand out in the world of weekly television." It debuts in the US in the autumn and will probably find its way to these shores at a later date.

In further games/mainstream entertainment crossover madness, **Squaresoft** have enlisted the help of a special effects studio to add some cinematic quality to their forthcoming RPG, ***Parasite Eve***. Square received outside help during the production of *Final Fantasy VII*, but this is the first time they have used a US film studio. Southern California's **Santa Barbara Studios** are best known for their computer graphics work in the film ***American Werewolf In Paris***, and assisted Square in a complex 30-second scene involving lifelike animation of a mutating rat. The studio's visual effects co-ordinator, **Diane Holland**, bellowed: "This is the start of a great relationship. This is one of the most satisfying projects we've ever done." Yeah.

Tim Cain, producer of **Interplay's** surprisingly good RPG ***Fallout***, has quit working on the sequel and left to pursue his own interests. Amid rumours of hair-pulling, spitting and abusive gestures, Interplay are insisting the split was amicable and that no legal action will follow.

Now read something else.

Point is all that you can score

SSI's new turn-based, squad-level WWII combat game *Soldiers Of War* is currently on Mindscape's schedule for an April release. From what we've seen so far, it looks a bit like *X-COM* meets *Close Combat*, although it's unlikely to prove any serious competition to either of those titles.

Fifteen scenarios in one campaign, including D-Day, the assault on Monte Cassino, plus various commando-style raids in other infamous locations, have been promised, and there'll also be a mission builder bundled with it should you feel the need to alter history completely. Each soldier will have up to 40 unique actions ('slit throat' has yet to be confirmed), utilising over 25Mb of animation to portray their movements.



***Soldiers Of War*: 'kick in nuts', 'stick fingers in eyes' and other such neat actions unlikely to be included.**

All for nothing



In a bid to silence the critics, Derek Smart has made the full version of his nine-years-in-the-making space epic *Battlecruiser 3000AD* available free on the Internet. In a lengthy message "to fellow gamers", he openly condemns publishers Take 2 for releasing an unfinished version of the game, as well as members of the trade press who denounced his ideas at the time.



With a new 2.0 version on the horizon, Smart hopes that by freely distributing a bug-fixed first version of *Battlecruiser*, gamers can decide for themselves whether the next incarnation will be worth buying or not. The full 50Mb download can be found via links from the *Battlecruiser 3000AD* website at **www.bc3000ad.com**.

YOU READ IT HERE FIRST

What's going on as our final pages hit the printers? Microsoft have dropped *Riot: Mobile Armour* because of a "difference of opinion" between Monolith and themselves, which is strange considering how good the game is currently looking. Monolith are now looking for a new publisher for the game. They are also likely to change the name of DirectEngine to avoid further conflict with big Bill Gates and co.

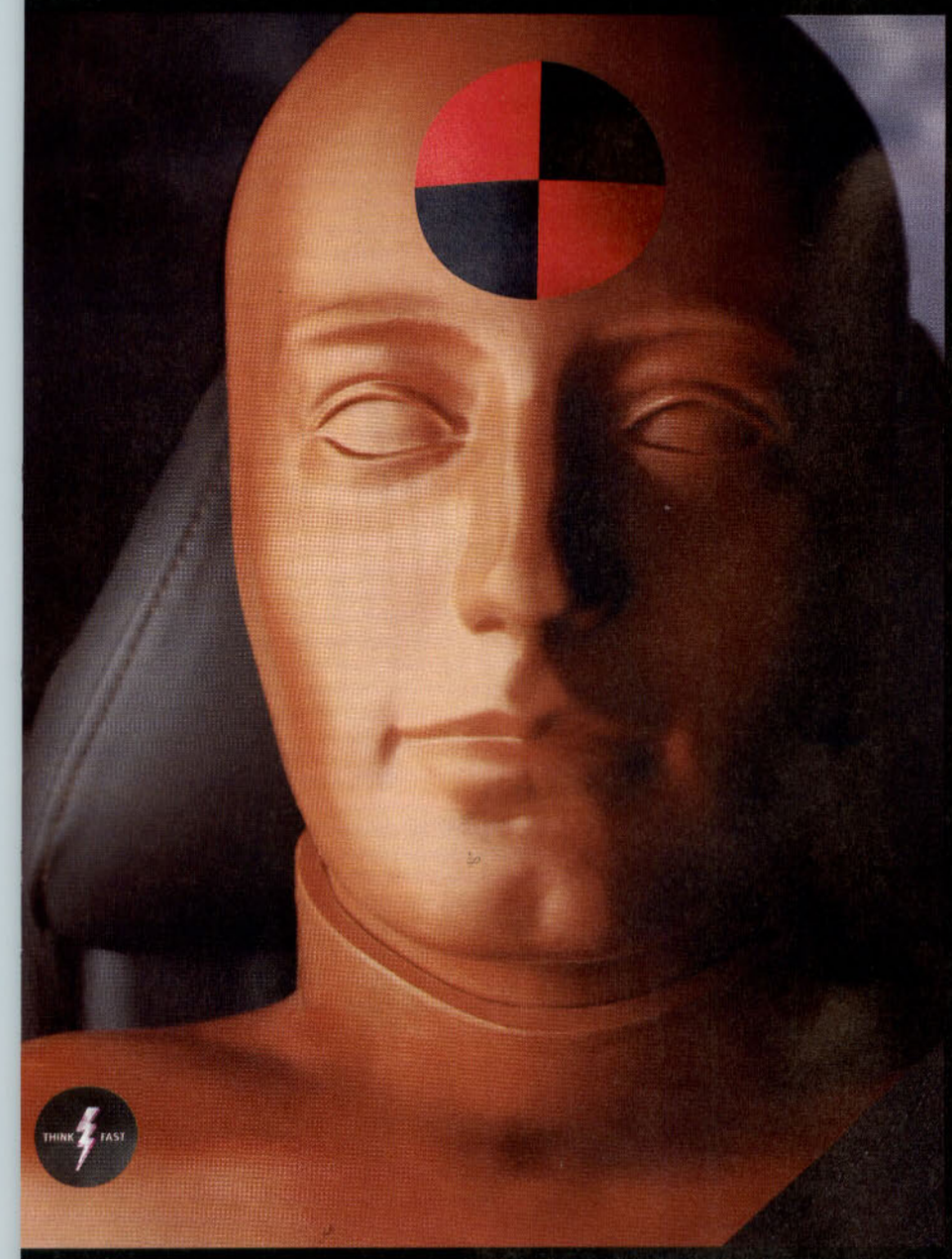
Sensible Soccer 2000 is to be renamed *Sensible Soccer World Cup 98* and will finally released in June.

KKND 2 is, in fact, to be published in the UK by Infogrames, and not EA as we said last issue *(Shoot that News Editor – Big Ed)*.

Lands Of Lore III – complete with a supposedly brilliant new 3D engine – has been announced as an autumn release from Westwood Studios, although we'll believe that when we see it.

MGM and EA have teamed up to publish *War Games*, *Return Fire II*, *Tomorrow Never Dies* and *Rollerball* (the latter based on the cult '70s film starring James Caan).

Finally, as the hilarious cartoon show *South Park* sweeps America (and prepares to sweep Europe – watch out for Channel 4 screenings in May), news of a game seemed pretty much inevitable. Acclaim, it seems, is the company that has won the right to develop one.



Our new Viper accelerator is so fast, we couldn't get anyone else to test it.

- RECORD-BREAKING ACCELERATION FOR WINDOWS ® NT AND WINDOWS® 95
- PHENOMENAL 3D FRAME RATES—SUPPORTS 20 BILLION OPERATIONS/SECOND
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HOT Shots

Hot Shots proudly presents the first ever in-game shots of *Carmageddon II: Carpocalypse Now*. New cars, new courses, new graphics – new everything... On top of that: new *Blood 2* in-game visuals, plus an update on how *Ultima: Ascension* is currently shaping up.

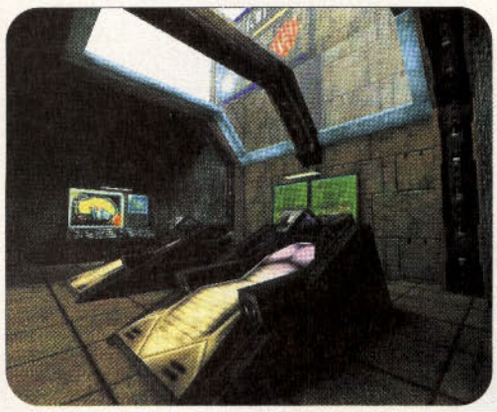
Blood 2 (Monolith/GT Interactive)

With all the other 3D action games falling behind because of iD's *Quake II* engine, Monolith are forging ahead with *Blood 2*, which was, until recently, being powered using Microsoft's DirectEngine.

Some fans have expressed concern over the 'feel' of the game (the screenshots are apparently too atmospheric – whatever that means), but Monolith are making assurances that the game will still be full of cheesy references and buckets of claret, only this time with a more intelligent storyline.

The chaps are keeping the finer details close to their chests, but when *Blood 2* finally arrives in the autumn we can expect a great-looking game that'll be just as much fun as the first one. Get up to date at www.blood2.com.



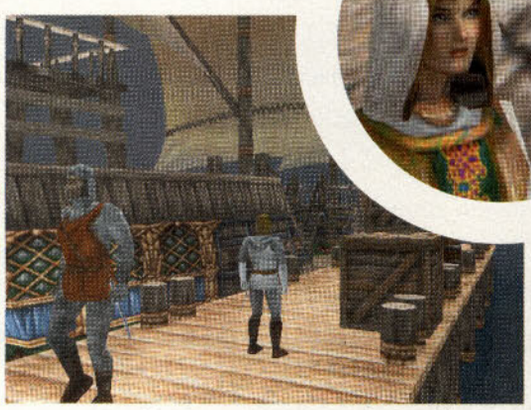










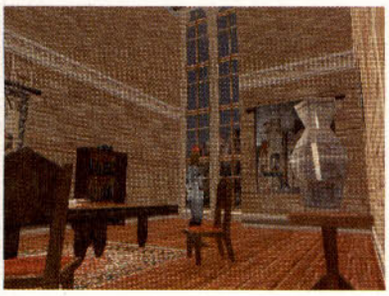




Ultima: Ascension (Origin/Electronic Arts)

Blimey – feast your eyes on these new *Ultima IX* shots! Origin have been keeping quiet about this game for a few months, but are now prepared to show us how it's coming along. Gone is the fixed perspective view (remember, this is the late 1990s and nothing but the very latest 3D engine will do...) and in comes a whole new system of exploration.

Richard Garriot and his cohorts are currently pulling the new graphics code and level design together, sewing the whole thing up with a constantly evolving, Avatar-based storyline (a previously discussed 'party' system having now been dropped). Intelligent non-player characters, a 'true' world physics model and a new magic system are all expected in what could turn out to be one of the best role-playing games of all time.



Carmageddon II: Carpocalypse Now (Stainless/SCi)

ZONE WORLD FIRST

Grisly details concerning SCi's forthcoming *Carmageddon II: Carpocalypse Now* continue to be pumped like dribbly datasperm into the gigantic throbbing *PC Zone* newswomb. And we're not just talking about dull old words, either – this month we've managed to secure a clutch of early in-game screenshots for you to 'pull yourselves orrf' to.

As you can see, *Carmageddon II* looks more realistic than ever before, with detailed vehicles, crisp hi-res 3D-accelerated visuals, and spangly new lighting effects. Speaking of vehicles, the game is set to feature a few 'zany' examples, such as an ice-cream van (replete with jingle to attract gullible pedestrians), a wingless aeroplane (with a bloody great propeller on the front), and a combine harvester which will bail its victims up into howling cubes of squirming gristle. *Herbie Goes Bananas* it is not.

In order to up the realism ante even further, each vehicle is constructed from many separate parts, and will react more convincingly as damage is sustained – cars can be bent in half, snapped in two or literally smashed into little pieces. There'll also be smashable windscreens. Drool, drool.

The game itself isn't out until Christmas, but we'll have more information next month...









HOT Shots





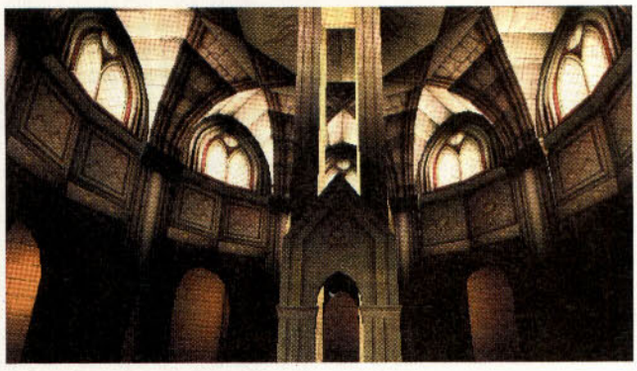


Wheel Of Time (Legend Entertainment)

Based on Robert Jordan's best-selling series of fantasy novels, *Wheel Of Time* is currently being designed at Legend Entertainment by Glen Dahlgren, author of the award-winning adventure game *Death Gate*. It's a first-person, 3D action/strategy game with role-playing elements, and uses Epic's *Unreal* engine to bring Jordan's intense fantasy world to life.

Wheel Of Time will feature 24-bit colour, MMX-enhanced, multiple dynamic (and coloured) light sourcing, complex geometry, smooth character animation including frame 'in-betweening' *(Where the computer fills the bits in between animation frames to make things smoother – Ed)*, real moving/rotating brushes, seamless level transition, scripted scenes and much, much more.

In order to make sure that what goes on the screen matches his vision of the world, Jordan himself will be reviewing the materials Legend create. Legend are looking for a release early in 1999.



F-15 (Jane's/Electronic Arts)

Jane's *F-15* not only contains a "groundbreaking flight model" based on data from the US Air Force, but it's also going to look rather snazzy as well. *F-15*'s "breakthrough" graphics engine is said to deliver "lightning-fast performance on a broad range of PCs". Players are promised amazingly realistic visual effects including true dynamic lighting and shading, real shadowing, swarms of glowing tracer fire, dissipating smoke trails, translucent clouds, crisp night vision, meticulously detailed objects and geographically accurate terrain. Oh, and not to mention loads of lens flare (it's very fashionable these days, don't you know). Produced by Andy Hollis (*F-15 Strike Eagle* series, *AH-64D Longbow*), *F-15* is currently lined up for an April ship out.







Dark Vengeance (Reality Bytes/ GT Interactive)

We've heard that US developer Reality Bytes' action adventure game *Dark Vengeance* has been picked up by GT Interactive for a release later this year.

Your challenge, as one of five unique characters, is to free your world from the clasp of a magical eclipse, beat back an army of Dark Elf forces, and end the bloody carnage and destruction which plagues your homeland. Bringing together a third-person perspective and state-of-the-art indoor/outdoor 3D worlds, *Dark Vengeance* will feature 20 missions, over 40 weapons and spells, 'in-engine cut-scenes', and over 40 enemies to slash to bits. Players will be able to participate in network games of up to 32 players (cross platform – Mac and PC! – in deathmatches and collaborative quests). Shounds shmart. Hic!











THIS PAGE IS



COMING MAY 98

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NINTENDO64

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PC ZONE our price

CHART Predictions

Welcome to *PC Zone*'s version of *The Chart Show*, sponsored by Our Price. Each month it'll feature the titles we think will be flying off the shelves in the coming weeks, and it will also play host to exclusive news and competitions.

DESPITE HAVING AN 18 CERTIFICATE, *DUKE NUKEM* HAS ENJOYED ITS coveted Top 10 position for many months now. However, competition could be on the horizon with the arrrival of a new title, *Duke Caribbean* – in at number 10 this month. It appears that after a few months' annihilation, *Duke* is ready for a little R&R. Cabana girls, a beach-side bar and Bermuda shorts are all he needs... That is, until the alien scum drop in for a little vacation of their own. So grab the sun block, because 'fun in the sun' just took on a whole new meaning!

To take part in this month's Our Price Top 10 prize giveaway, just put pen to paper, answer the question below and send it in to: PC Zone, Our Price Competition (62), Dennis Publishing Ltd, 19 Bolsover St, London W1P 7HJ.

Our Price Question:

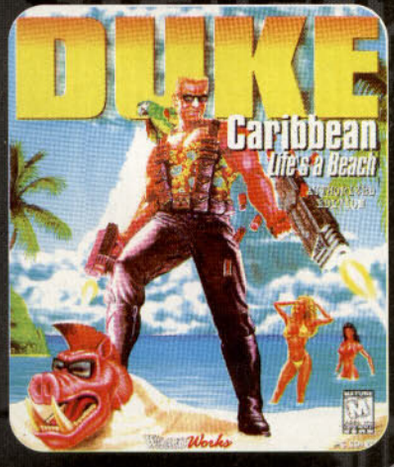
WHICH FAMOUS ACTOR WAS KNOWN AS 'THE DUKE'?

Rules and restrictions: All entries must be received by Friday 10 April 1998. No correspondence will be entered into. Multiple entries will not be accepted. The Editor's decision is final and the winners will be notified by post. All other usual competition rules and restrictions apply.









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2	CHAMPIONSHIP MANAGER 2 97/98	(Eidos Interactive)	£19.99
3	TOMB RAIDER II	(Eidos Interactive)	£29.99
4	DEPTHS OF DOOM	(One Stop)	£16.99
5	DUKE NUKEM	(Eidos Interactive)	£9.99
6	QUAKE II	(Activision)	£29.99
7	FIFA 98: RTWC	(EA Sports)	£29.99
8	WORMS 2	(MicroProse)	£29.99
9	BLADE RUNNER	(Virgin Interactive)	£34.99
10	DUKE CARIBBEAN	(GT Interactive)	£16.99

DISCLAIMER: The Top 10 printed is correct at the time of going to press but positions, titles and prices may vary throughout the month.

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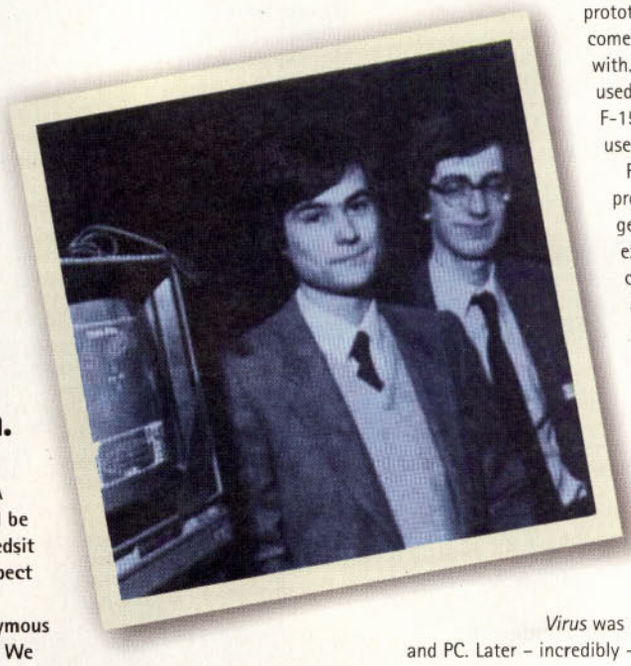
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Oi! ...Braben

Charlie Brooker has long considered himself a member of the *Elite*. We think of him more as a *Virus*. Which is probably why we asked him to interview David Braben.



IN THE GOOD OLD DAYS, WHEN A best-selling computer game could be knocked together in a Surbiton bedsit and consumers drooled at the prospect of a whopping 32K (that's *K*) RAM upgrade, the most successful titles became synonymous with their authors. We knew who'd written what. We knew their names. There was Sandy White, author of *3D Ant Attack*; there was Matthew Smith with *Jet Set Willy*; Steve Crow with *Starquake*; Jon Ritman with *Head Over Heels*; who could forget the leering village-butcher face of portly Kevin Toms, erstwhile king of *Football Manager*?

And then there was David Braben and Ian Bell, the *Elite* boys. In its day, *Elite* was a bona fide jaw-dropper: a smooth, engrossing polygonal 3D space adventure game which at a stroke fulfilled the *Blake's 7* fantasies of every lank-haired 13-year-old boy in the land. Following their initial burst of success, Braben and Bell parted company, with Bell getting into trance, body painting and martial arts, and Braben into heavy all-night coding sessions. The latest fruit of his labour is *V2000*, a sequel to his popular 16-bit title *Virus*. *PC Zone* caught up with Braben via the wonderful World Wide Web, and tossed him a few questions regarding *Elite*, *Virus*, the *First Encounters* debacle and the fundamental nature of the universe itself...

PC Zone: So, *V2000* is a sequel to *Virus*. Could you explain a little about the original game for those readers who may never have seen it?

David Braben: *Virus* started life as a game called *Lander*, which was given away with the Archimedes. I was given a prototype machine and three months to come up with something to show it off with. In comparison with what I'd been used to, this was like being given an F-15 to go shopping with when I was used to a bike with a squeaky wheel.

For someone who actually thinks programming is fun – maybe I don't get out enough – this was an excellent opportunity. In *Lander*, you controlled a hovering thing shaped a bit like a block of cheese, flying over a solid 3D patchwork quilt. It was possibly the first filled 3D game, so it was quite advanced for its time. This was very quickly followed up by *Zarch*, which used the 3D quilt from *Lander* but was a full game, with bad guys, levels and everything, and was the first game for the Archimedes.

The idea was filled out, and *Virus* was released for the Amiga, Atari ST and PC. Later – incredibly – a guy called Steve Dunn ported it to the Spectrum.

PCZ: What was the aim of the game?

DB: Well, the player had to prevent aliens in various weird and wonderful craft from spreading a virus over this patchwork quilt. That was it, really. But I think what attracted people to it was the feel of the craft. It was quite graceful, but very hard to learn initially. People were divided into two distinct camps – those who loved it and those who hated it. Nevertheless it did well and won many awards, including 16-bit Game of the Year 1988.

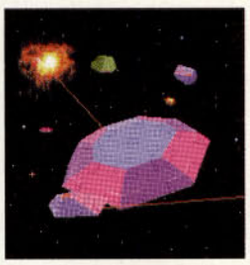
PCZ: What are the major differences between this latest incarnation and the fondly remembered original?

DB: All that's really carried over is the general concept and the feel of the craft. Obviously the graphics are very different, but the main difference is in the depth of the gameplay. In *V2000*, all the bad guys are creatures, ranging from little ants to giant pterodactyl-like dragon things, but the player also has people to protect. These people will help the player in return for being rescued, which adds to the gameplay hugely. But the monsters also want the people.

The levels aren't laid out in the conventional manner, they're linked together by all sorts of hidden bits, and in many levels the player cannot complete it without some toy or other that they have earned elsewhere.

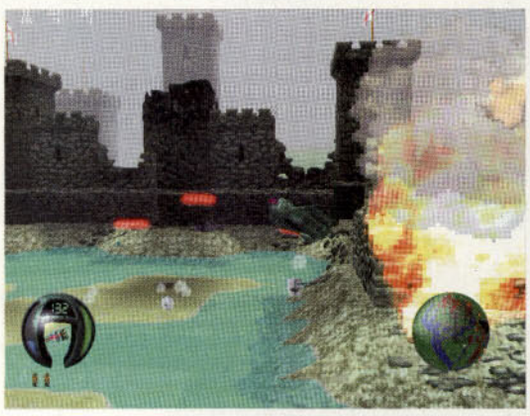
PCZ: You're renowned for your devotion to simulating real-world physics. Are we going to see much of this kind of caper in *V2000*?

DB: Yes, I suppose you can go over the top with this sort of stuff – I think perhaps I did with *Frontier*. The thing with *Frontier* is that it had many elements of a simulation. It was important to me to get across the sheer size of the galaxy and of each stellar system, but this caused a lot of problems for the flight mechanisms. Nevertheless, I think real-world physics has its place; I think there is little justification for rubbish collision detection, or things falling at a constant speed rather than according to gravity. A few physics bits have been sneaked into *V2000* which I think add to the way the game plays. The creatures are all animated on-the-fly, so they can climb over obstacles, get blown up by explosion blasts and react to the player. It also means there's none of the ▶









The seminal *Elite* (above) was considered state of the art by gamers when it first emerged way back in the 80s, when the home computer was very much in its infancy.



What's Your Game?

restrictions where creatures only walk convincingly on *flat* areas of landscape, as in *Turok*.

PCZ: Any plans for a further entry into the *Elite* canon?

DB: I would love to, but it will be a long way off. There are many things still left to do in the *Elite* genre that I would love to do in the future, and I think it could be a great game.

PCZ: What about *Elite* co-author Ian Bell? Any plans to work with him again?

DB: No. After *Elite* he got interested in other things, such as martial arts and getting a life! That's mostly why I ended up doing *Frontier* on my own. As far as I know he still programs occasionally, but has done nothing commercially since *Elite*.

PCZ: If for some zany reason you had to write a porno version of *Elite*, what sort of ships would you design for it?

DB: Eh? There would be better ways of doing a porno game.

PCZ: *First Encounters* came in for quite a bit of flak. Did you feel the criticism was fair, or overly harsh? What could have been done, either by yourself or the company involved, to prevent such a situation arising?

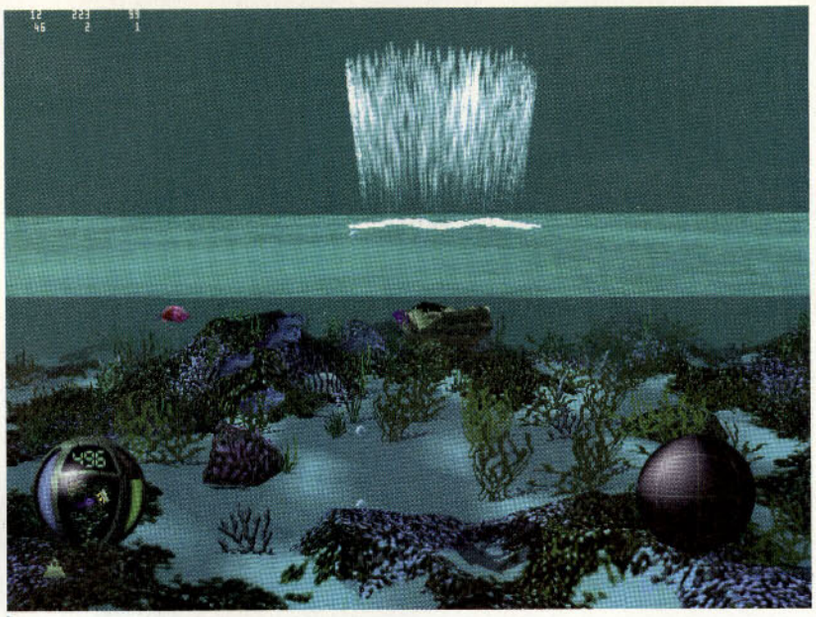
DB: What happened with *First Encounters* was a real shame. I think the game itself had tons of really nice things in it, but shouldn't have been released as it was. Sadly, there's still a lawsuit going on, so I can't talk about it yet.

Generally though, with games development, the time between beta testing and release is sometimes a fraught one. Some publishers – perhaps only a few – have too much of an eye on their commitments to distributors, time booked at duplicators, advertising in the press and so on, and therefore put huge pressure on developers. In theory, deciding when to publish is a joint decision, but in practice it's largely up to the publisher. I've heard of occasions when developers have withheld manuals or even left in banner screens or easy-to-remove messages to prevent release until a game is ready.



PCZ: You have a keen interest in astronomy. Tell us one incredible fact about the universe.

DB: There's detail out there at every scale we have looked at so far. Regardless of how far you 'zoom out', at no point does it become grey and uniform. From star clusters, to galaxies, to clusters of galaxies... Well *I* think it's pretty incredible.



***V2000* will sport suitably lush visuals, although David's keen to point out that it will run on a modest Pentium.**

PCZ: Have you read *A Brief History Of Time*, and did you understand it all?

DB: I found it a bit heavy going, but it seemed to make sense.

PCZ: So, is the universe ever going to implode upon itself?

DB: Doesn't look like it, but it depends on certain obscure values. There's enough doubt to allow scientists to go on arguing about it – and, as Douglas Adams would have it, appearing on chat shows – for many years yet!

PCZ: Are there any final points you'd like to raise?

DB: Loads, but I'll make do with one subject. Over the last few years there's been a bit of an 'arms race' with machine specs, largely triggered by the advent of hardware render cards, and I think gameplay is getting forgotten. There's not really much excuse for hardware-only games. I think it's fine to get better visuals if you have a hardware card, but there's little reason – except perhaps laziness – to not support software rendering on the PC. It's keeping the PC games business in the minority compared to, say, the PlayStation, as the cost of staying current is huge. How many people bought a spangly new P133 a year ago, only to view it as an ancient, wheezy old beast now? No other piece of domestic kit costing £1000 or more devalues so quickly. That's why *V2000* will support older machines without 3D accelerator cards.

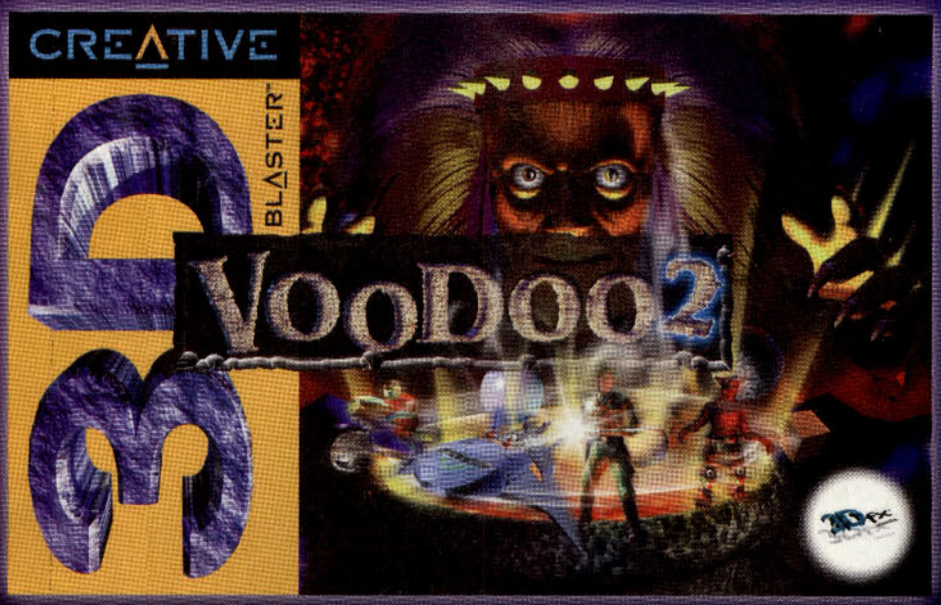
***"In V2000 there's none of the restrictions where creatures only walk convincingly on flat areas of landscape, as in* Turok." David Braben**





Real-world physics feature heavily in every David Braben game, and *V2000* will be no exception. Although, as always, the emphasis will be on gameplay.

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Space Bunnies Must Die

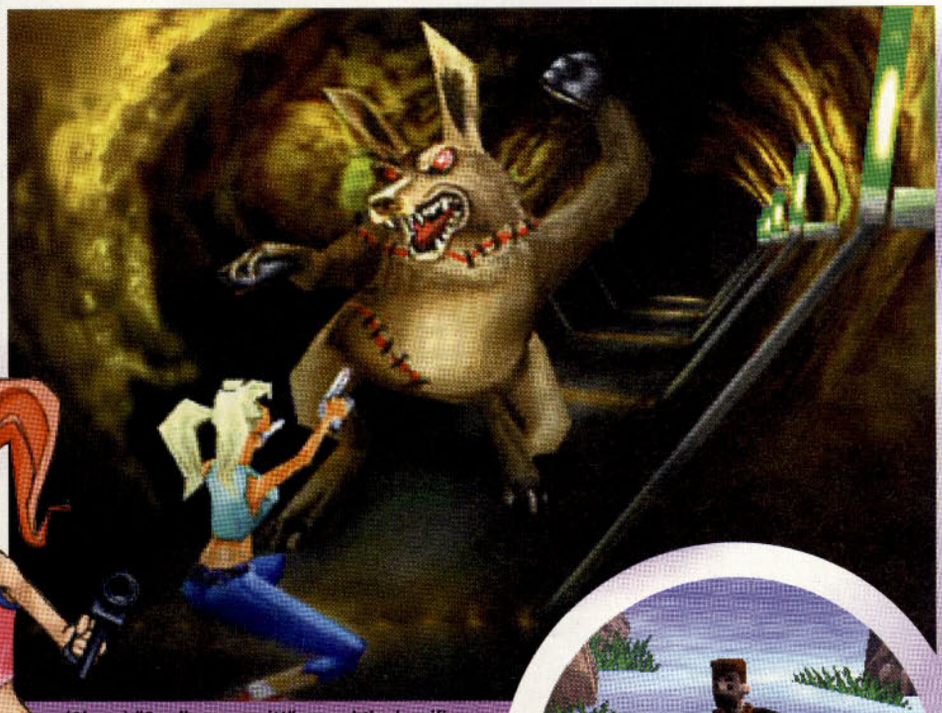
MOST PEOPLE ASSOCIATE THE word 'rabbit' with carrots, myxomatosis, *Watership Down* and Beatrix Potter; shooting them repeatedly isn't what usually springs to mind – until now. Charlie Brooker checks out the first lagomorphic* 3D action game.

AS ALMOST ANYONE WITH A PAIR OF FULLY functioning eyeballs and a rudimentary knowledge of computer gaming lore will attest, *Space Bunnies* bears a passing resemblance to *Tomb Raider*, Core Design's wildly successful platform game. And we're not just talking about the general style: both games star a delectable piece of polygonic cheesecake, who runs around firing great big guns at countless fuzzy-wuzzy animals. Muscling in on Lara's territory, *Space Bunnies'* leading player is one Allison Huxter, who seems altogether more down-to-earth than the plummy-voiced Ms Croft: she's a waitress. And she wears jeans. Just like Lara, she also has an improbably large chest, a ludicrously small waist, and a frankly insulting pair of lithe, protracted legs. She's also incredibly agile – capable of backflipping over a gaping chasm without so much as breaking into a sweat, or opening a carton of milk without spilling it down her front. In other words it's the sort of thing sad fanboys lap up by the bucketload: even if the game itself fails to fulfil its potential, you can bet we'll be seeing lame nude 'fakes' of its main protagonist circulating in the spod newsgroups.

Still, by all accounts *Space Bunnies* shouldn't be a disappointment – it promises lashings of real-time, edge-of-the-seat action, spread liberally throughout ten distinct stages. The basic premise, in case you're wondering, involves an extraterrestrial race of rabbit-like alien terrors who touch down in the desert surrounding the conveniently-monikered town of Jackrabbit, New Mexico, and then proceed to terrify the local residents. Part of their foul scheme revolves around a secret 'bunnification' lab, wherein they mutate ordinary Earth creatures, such as cows, into horrifying rabbit-like warrior drones. Sounds unlikely, but hey, it's a computer game, remember?

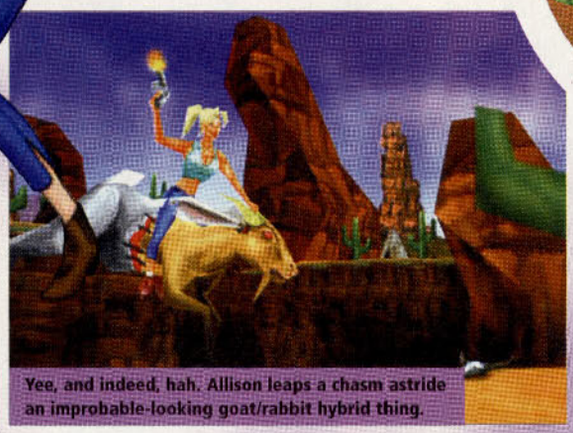
Visually, *Space Bunnies* is a scream: imagine a whacked-out fusion of *The X-Files, Invasion Of The Body Snatchers* and *Rugrats*. Just check out these screenshots for proof. If the finished product nips along at a decent frame rate – and the 3D accelerator card support will help – it could be in the running for an impromptu *PC Zone* 'Best Looking Game of the Year' award.

The final code should be with us any moment now, and as soon as we get hold of a copy, we promise that we'll be writing it up in luxuriant detail. Until then, sit still and stop fidgeting – or visit developer Pulse's website (listed far right) and download the demo.



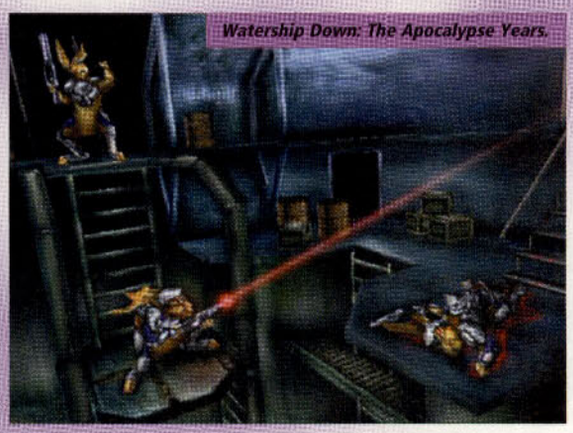
(Above) "Smell my armpit!" roared the horrific lagomorphic monstrosity. (Left) The star of the show in just one of her favourite costumes. She's discovered hair bleach since these development sketches, apparently.





Yee, and indeed, hah. Allison leaps a chasm astride an improbable-looking goat/rabbit hybrid thing.





Watership Down: The Apocalypse Years.



Allison Huxter in classic *Charlie's Angels* leaping-away-from-an-explosion pose.

Product details

Developer: Pulse
Publisher: Take 2
Release Date: TBC
Website: www.pulsenetwork.com

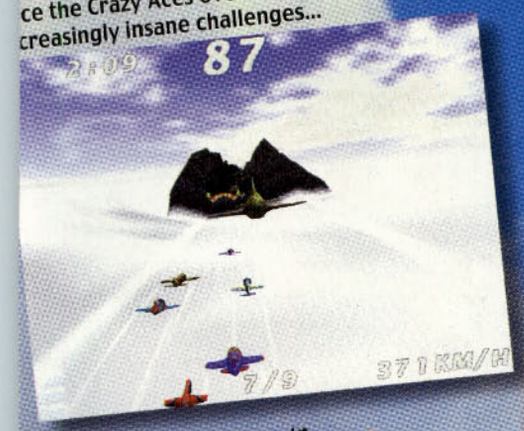
* Lagomorphic: *That's what a rabbit is, dumbo – Zoological Ed.*

Plane Crazy is simple to pick up, but really hard to master – PC Zone

You would be Plane Crazy to buy another game – PC Format

The aerial race game for the insane!

ce the Crazy Aces over
creasingly insane challenges...



ber, fly low to get the good air



Collect the power-ups!





Wireplay

PlayStation

ilable
9, 1998

Available
Summer '98

Europress

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RPG (working title)

CHRIS ANDERSON'S NEVER-ending search for the perfect role-playing game takes him to Gremlin, who are expecting their forthcoming title to challenge Origin's position as leaders in the field.

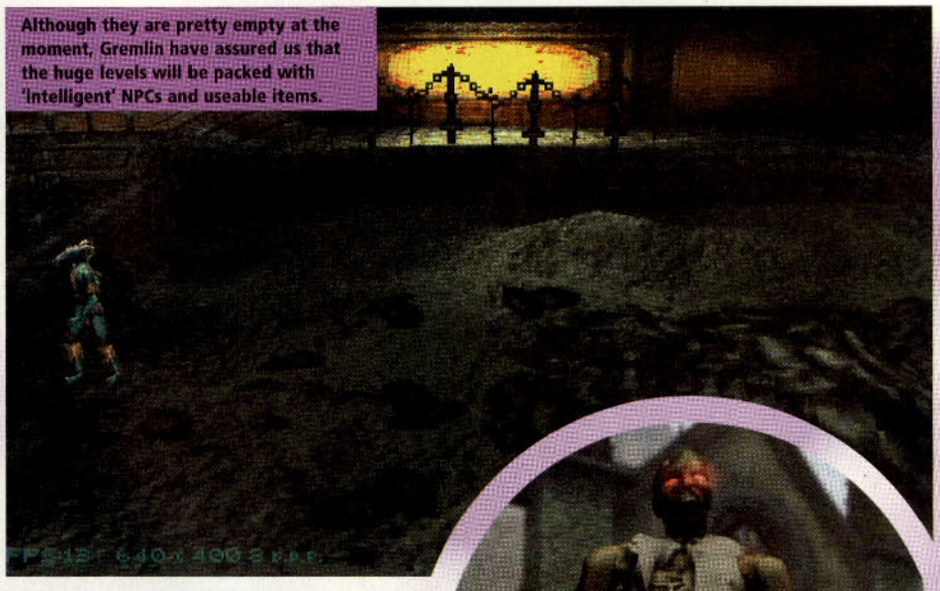
THERE ARE TWO KINDS OF RPG: COMMON or garden top-down isometric affairs, and the more ambitious first-person variety. Incredible as it may seem, one company stands head and shoulders above all others when it comes to both types. I am of course referring to Origin, the undisputed champions of the role-playing universe. *Ultima Underworld* is still the definitive first-person role-playing adventure, despite recent competition from *Lands Of Lore 2*; *Ultima VI, VII* and *VIII* all set a benchmark for the top-down genre that many have tried to emulate, but without success.

Gremlin intend to change all this with the release later this year of *RPG* (working title), a top-down role-playing game which they hope will take on the combined might of *Ultima IX* and *Diablo 2*, both of which are scheduled for release towards the end of the year.

Of course, all publishers will claim their new titles are set to be better than everything that came before them, but Gremlin have very good reason to be confident about this one. Their secret weapon comes in the shape of Paul Green, designer and producer of the criminally underrated *Realms Of The Haunting*. *ROTH*'s hallmarks are beautiful level design, engrossing and addictive gameplay, and a deeply atmospheric game environment. *PC Zone* was given a private showing of *RPG*, and we can say with some confidence that Paul's latest project is shaping up to be even better than his last. The major thing that sets it apart from previous RPGs is the fully rotational 3D game engine, which is extremely quick and can handle large amounts of detail and characters on-screen. This not only allows for a complex game world, but also sets the scene for a comprehensive rogues' gallery of characters and potentially massive battles. Think along the lines of a more densely populated *Syndicate Wars*, with wizards, magic and monsters, and you're on the right track.

So it looks good, but what are the designers doing to ensure *RPG* will batter the opposition come the autumn? Paul is quick to state his case. "Well, in terms of gameplay, people can expect a sort of hybrid that takes the best elements of both *Ultima VII* and *Diablo* and drops the player into a totally immersive environment. We want the game world of *RPG* to be massive, with loads of villages and towns to explore and lots of different 'intelligent' characters to interact with. We want people to completely lose themselves in this game, and make it so good they won't ever want to leave."

Watch out, Lord British, there's a new kid on the block and he wants a big piece of the action.

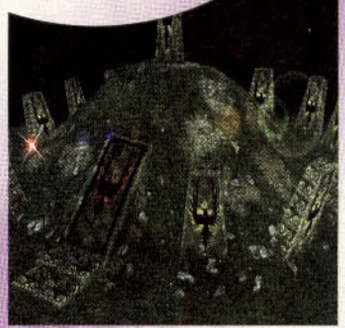


Although they are pretty empty at the moment, Gremlin have assured us that the huge levels will be packed with 'intelligent' NPCs and useable items.



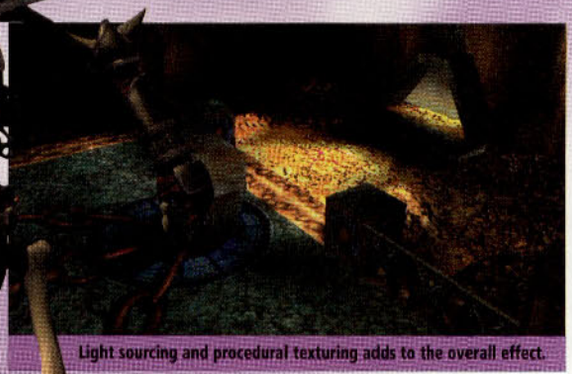


RPG will feature many beautifully detailed landscapes.









Light sourcing and procedural texturing adds to the overall effect.

Product details

Developer: Gremlin Interactive
Publisher: Gremlin Interactive
Release date: October
Website: www.gremlin.co.uk

PC CD

THERE ARE OTHER GOAL BASED GAMES TO PLAY THIS YEAR



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Buggy

AS KIDS, EVERYBODY WANTED one. Now that long-lost childhood dream can finally come true – and you'll never need to replace the batteries. Jeremy Wells is the man at the controls.

JUST WHEN YOU THOUGHT YOU'D NEVER want to see another 3D racing game ever again, Gremlin have come up with an original take on the genre, incorporating elements of the classic *Micro Machines* and the age-old favourite *Buggy Boy* on the Amiga.

"We wanted to develop a driving game from a new perspective," explains producer Bill Newsham, trying not smirk at the obvious pun, "and we wanted it to be very hands-on in terms of gameplay. You just pick up the controller and away you go. And it's dead fast, just like the real thing."

With the emphasis on choice and arcade action, Gremlin aim to include 16 different buggies, each with their own distinctive paint job and handling characteristics. "Some respond like drugged bison, while others flit around like pond skaters in a gale," maintains Bill. There are also plans for 15 tracks that range from sun-scorched beaches to subterranean grottos, and from woods to miniature gardens. But there'll be more to *Buggy* than just crossing the finishing line first: "All the tracks will be littered with obstacles which can be avoided or jumped. There will also be jumps that will propel the buggies high into the air, enabling them to perform stunts as well as providing a novel way of overtaking."

As Bill expertly guides his mercurial buggy around one of the earlier tracks, it's clear that *Buggy* is not only extremely quick, but also quite different from any other racing game seen to date. In an effort to add more in the way of gameplay and raise the stakes as far as replay value is concerned, the team have included a number of innovative new features that will challenge players and convince them to come back for more. "Every course will have slalom gates, and the player must pass through as many as they can," explains Bill as he swerves to accelerate towards just such a brightly coloured gate. "The seven colours allocated to the gates are used to build sequences, and hitting gates in sequence will produce a variety of beneficial results – short sequences will deliver simple bonuses, such as speed bursts, while more complicated sequences will give the player extra abilities, like time stops and mega-grips. We're going to throw in a few surprises too, of course."

Four modes of play, including a split-screen option and Time Attack, add greatly to *Buggy*'s appeal, while the option of super-smooth 3D-accelerated graphical effects such as real-time light sourcing and shadows, fogging, translucency and new particle effects should make *Buggy* easy on the eye. Guess we'll know for sure come the spring.

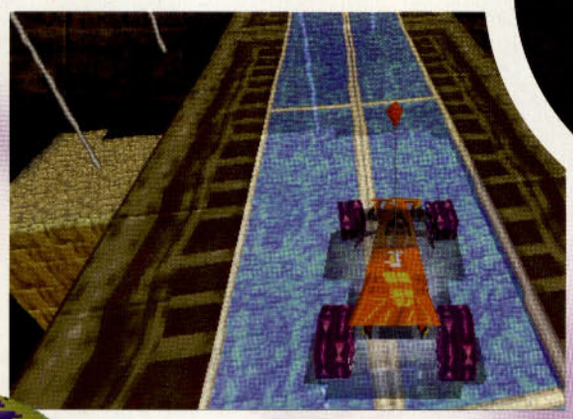




All the tracks are littered with obstacles which can be avoided or jumped.

Buggy will give you the chance to take control of one of 16 super-compact, radio-controlled vehicles. Each possesses a distinctive paint job and its own unique handling characteristics (right).









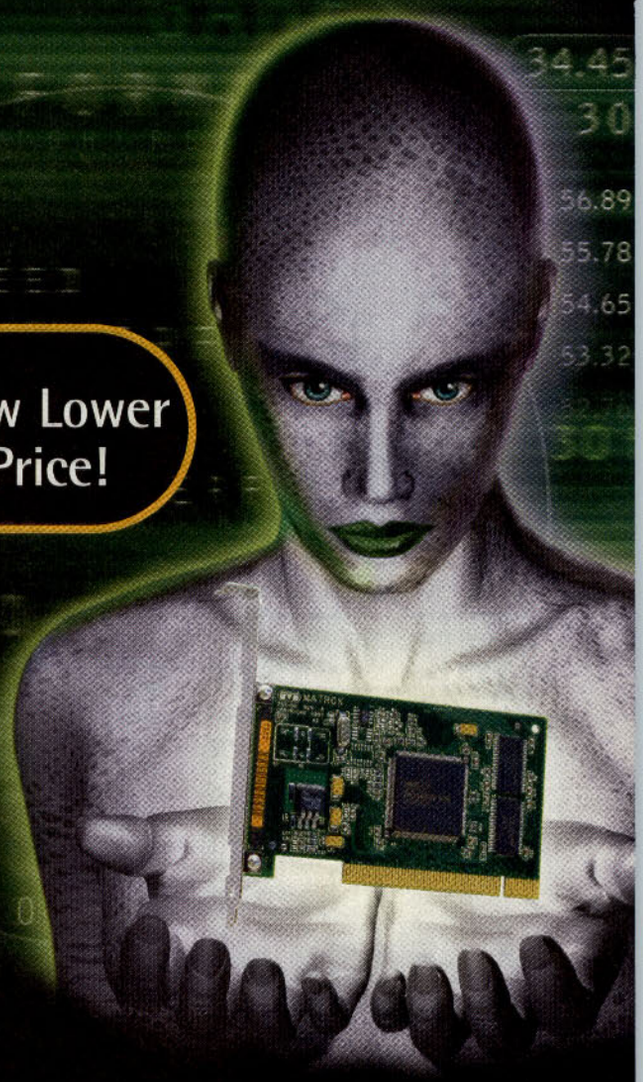
The 3D-accelerated version is quick and will sport real-time light sourcing, shadows, fogging, solid external objects, and new particle effects; you won't be able to see your buggy for dust.



Product details

Developer: Gremlin Interactive
Publisher: Gremlin Interactive
Release date: May
Website: www.gremlin.co.uk

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First Encounter



Mystery Club: Gruesome Castle

SWAP THE MONKEY FOR A pooch, reckons Charlie Brooker, and what you've got here is a polygonal *Scooby Doo*. And that's okay by him.

SCOOBY DOO: NOW *THERE* WAS A SHOW. Essentially an animated forerunner of *The X-Files*, but with more believable storylines, every facet of *Scooby Doo* is indelibly stamped on the minds of an entire generation. Hardly surprising, really, with each and every episode being identical to the previous one. Every week, Scooby and Shaggy would somehow become separated from the main group. Every week, Thelma would lose her glasses, Daphne would get kidnapped, and Freddie would do absolutely nothing of interest whatsoever. And every week, the villain would turn out to be old Mr Saunders from the local garage...

Why all this sudden nostalgia? Well, *Mystery Club: Gruesome Castle*, from Aussie game developers Gee Whizz (previously responsible for *Flight Of The Amazon Queen*), bears a striking resemblance to the legendary *Doo*, right down to the 'Mystery Machine'-type vehicle in which its lead characters drive around. The biggest difference is the appearance of a babbling monkey in place of a slow-witted hound, but aside from that the similarities are undeniable.

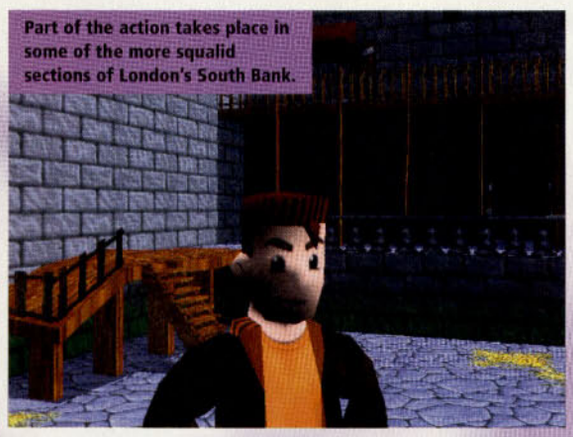
All of which might mark the game down as a bit of a yawner, were it not for the fact that it looks like it could be fantastic. The developers' stated aim is to blend the 3D exploration of *Mario 64* with the adventuring fun of *Zelda*. And if the standard of the early code we've seen is anything to go by, they could be on to something – big-time. Think *Little Big Adventure* as produced by Hanna-Barbera and you've got a reliable handle on what we're looking at here.

The appealing cartoon characters in these screenshots may look like sprites, but in fact they're all constructed from polygons, and kitted out in detailed attire to spare their blushes. As you can see, it all looks the part, with some pleasantly spooky/charming locations, reasonable animation and multiple camera angles all working together to create an enjoyable 'toonish' playing experience.

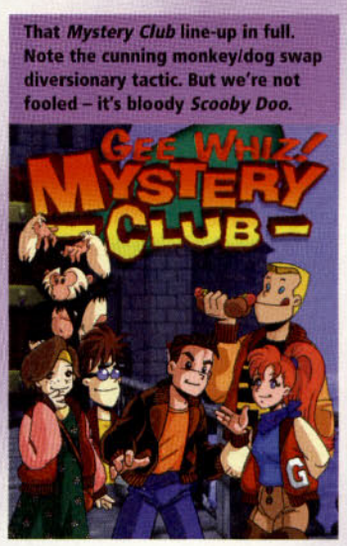
It's early days yet, but assuming Gee Whiz can iron out the minor bugs and provide some engrossing puzzles into the bargain, *Mystery Club* could be a great big walloping hit. Incredibly, the title hasn't yet been signed to a publisher, although that situation is almost certain to change by the time you read this. And who knows, once signed, maybe they'll phone around and try to secure a certain cartoon licence?



Eeeh, poncy lighting effects and everything. Don't get many of them to the dozen.



Part of the action takes place in some of the more squalid sections of London's South Bank.



That *Mystery Club* line-up in full. Note the cunning monkey/dog swap diversionary tactic. But we're not fooled – it's bloody *Scooby Doo*.



Explore dark and scary locations until your head falls off.



Product details

Developer: Gee Whiz
Publisher: TBC
Release date: TBC
Website: www.geewhiz.com.au

IN THE YEAR 2144, WE WILL HAVE ELIMINATED DISCRIMINATION BASED ON THE COLOUR OF OUR NEIGHBOURS SKIN.



DARKENS: DON'T HAVE BRAIN CELLS TO REALISE THEY'RE ALIVE, LET ALONE FIGHT. CAN'T UNDERSTAND COMMANDS EVEN FROM THEIR LEADERS, SO THEY SPEND ALL THEIR TIME FALLING OVER THEMSELVES TRYING TO DEFEND THEIR THICK HAIRY REARS. CAN'T UNDERSTAND WHY THEY BOTHER TO BE HONEST. IF THEY HAD ANY SENSE THEY WOULD HAVE THE DECENCY TO STAY STILL WHILE YOU SLIT THEIR THROATS.



HUMANS: DON'T KNOW IF YOU NOTICED, BUT DO THESE GUYS SMELL! THEIR LACK OF EVEN THE MOST RUDIMENTARY HYGIENE SKILLS IS MATCHED ONLY BY THEIR ARROGANCE.... MINCING AROUND IN THEIR SHINY UNIFORMS AND BRAND NEW GUNS. SPEND MOST OF THEIR TIME FIGHTING EACH OTHER OVER MONEY. ANY HUMAN WILL SELL OUT HIS ENTIRE RACE FOR A HANDFUL OF CREDITS. THEIR ONE REDEEMING FEATURE IS THEY REALLY BLEED GOOD WHEN CUT UP.



SCORPS: MOST RACES ARE PRETTY LOW DOWN, BUT THEY ARE ALL EQUALLY DISGUSTED AT THE FACT THAT SCORPS CAN'T EVEN FACE THEIR ENEMY SQUARE ON - THEY HAVE TO SNEAK ABOUT UNDERGROUND BEFORE THEY ATTACK. THE BEST OPTION IS TO GAS THIS GENETIC TRASH IN THEIR TUNNELS AND HOPE THEY CAN AT LEAST FERTILISE SOMETHING..... HOWEVER, THEY'RE BOUND TO FIND EVEN BEING MANURE A LITTLE COMPLICATED FOR THEM.



BENDIAN MERCS: DID I SAY HUMANS WERE ARROGANT? NOTHING COMPARES TO A BENDIAN MERC. GODS GIFT TO THE UNIVERSE IN THEIR OPINION. OVER MILLIONS OF YEARS OF NATURAL SELECTION AND EUGENICS HAVE PRODUCED THE UGLIEST SONS OF BITCHES IN THE KNOWN UNIVERSE. WILL STOP AT NOTHING TO CAPTURE, KILL AND OVERRUN ANY SETTLEMENT OTHER THAN BENDIAN MERC, (ALTHOUGH THEY'RE NOT ADVERSE TO 'HAVING A GO' AT THEIR OWN KIND). "MERCY IS FOR THE WEAK" THEY SAY. WELL, DO THE UNIVERSE A FAVOUR WHEN YOU SEE A BENDIAN MERC, GIVE'EM SOME OF THEIR OWN MEDICINE, AND POUND THEM MONGRELS INTO THE DUST.

A TODD PORTER GAME

ION STORM

EIDOS INTERACTIVE

DOMINION
STORM OVER GIFT 3

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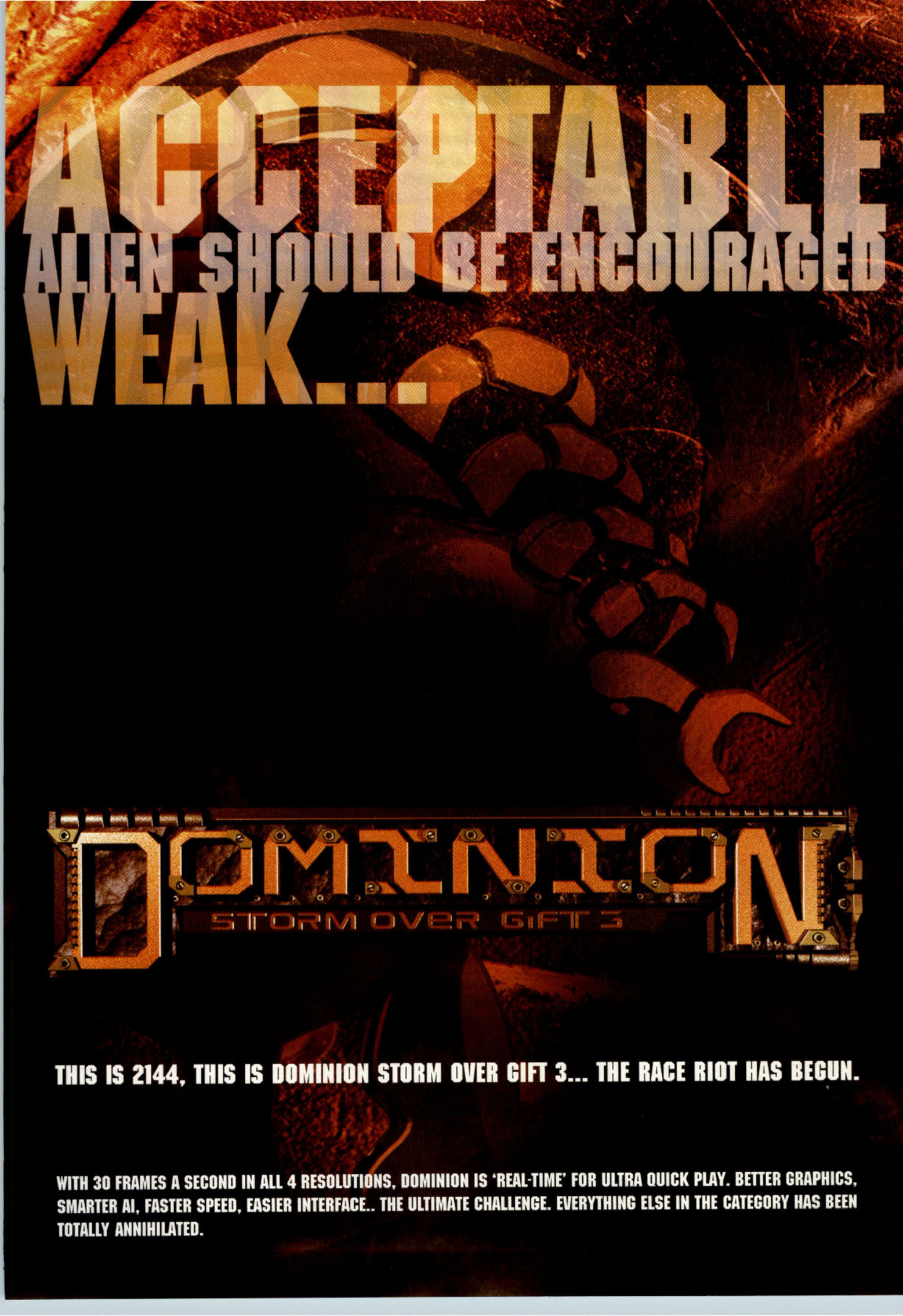


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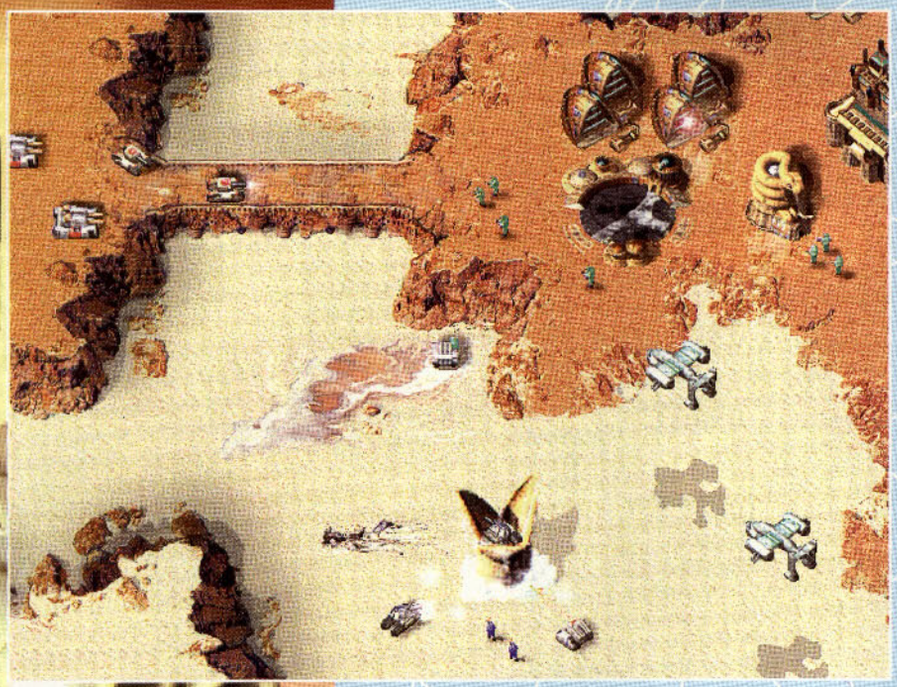

ACCEPTABLE
ALIEN SHOULD BE ENCOURAGED
WEAK...
DOMINION
STORM OVER GIFT 3
THIS IS 2144, THIS IS DOMINION STORM OVER GIFT 3... THE RACE RIOT HAS BEGUN.
WITH 30 FRAMES A SECOND IN ALL 4 RESOLUTIONS, DOMINION IS 'REAL-TIME' FOR ULTRA QUICK PLAY. BETTER GRAPHICS, SMARTER AI, FASTER SPEED, EASIER INTERFACE.. THE ULTIMATE CHALLENGE. EVERYTHING ELSE IN THE CATEGORY HAS BEEN TOTALLY ANNIHILATED.

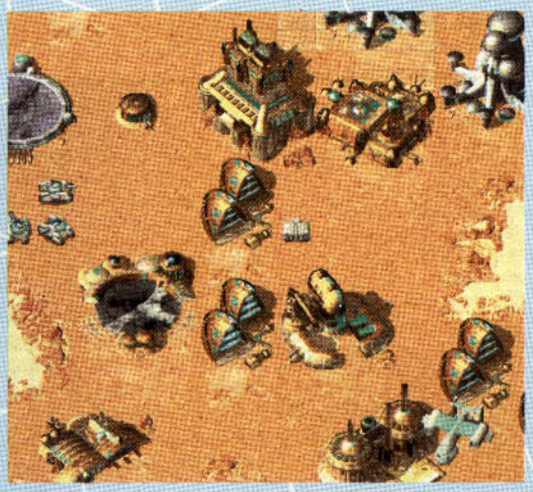
DUNE 2000











(Left) You just can't keep a good worm down. In fact, moving your units over the open spice fields could, like rain, bring them up to the surface. And they have an insatiable appetite for metal and human flesh, which is why... (Above) You have to build your base on solid rocky ground.

With ritual substance abuse a central part of his life these days, Richie Shoemaker tries out some of the spice mélange to see if it'll make his red eyes blue.

BACK IN APRIL 1993, TWO THINGS happened that were to irreversibly alter the face of computer gaming forever. Both events were understated affairs that barely registered as farts at the time, but four years down the line each has mushroomed into a gigantic gaming air biscuit. Often imitated (especially of late), neither has actually been bettered.

But hey, instead of me gushing on about the mag which you are reading, let us concentrate instead on the phenomenon that was (and still is) *Dune 2*, essentially the first decent real-time strategy game and one of the first games to be reviewed by *PC Zone*. *Dune 2* was an evolutionary leap onto dry land for a genre characterised by hexes and halitosis. Gone were the reinforcements that arrived in turn 13, and instead players had to create their own kick-ass units by collecting resources, building bases and defending them from relentless attack. It was *Sim City* with tanks; *Utopia* in real-time; a strategy/action game, no less. And it was fantastic.

Wavy lines (don't do it)

The first game was based on the film of the book and was an interesting mix of adventure and strategy that, somewhat ambitiously perhaps, almost managed to capture the pseudo-religious ambience of the movie. Although it was well received, the characters (as in the film) all sported hairstyles reminiscent of the Bay City Rollers. French developers Cryo were responsible. Rather than go one better by upping the adventure element, new boys Westwood changed things somewhat. The rest is legend. But enough of the history lesson. We don't want to get too misty-eyed just to build up the fact that *Dune 2000* is a remake of a four-year-old game. Or do we? Lewis Peterson, the game's producer, maintains that their make-over is still something to shout about.

"*Dune 2000* is an RTS, much like the RTSs you know and love, like *C&C*. However, it's set in the Dune universe, an exotic setting full of political intrigue and danger. It was a classic game that we wanted to give devoted fans a chance to revisit, and give a new generation of gamers the opportunity to experience for the first time. The engine in *Dune 2000* is new. It has been developed to support various new features that were not found in the original. It will contain all of the simplicity and excitement that made the original, *C&C* and *Red Alert* fun to play."

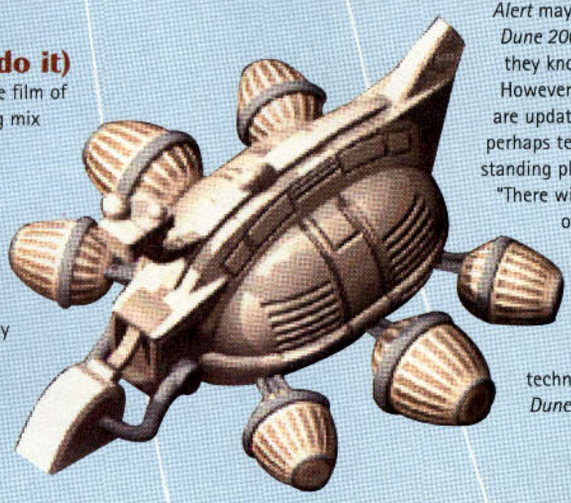
Something borrowed...

What will be apparent only to people who battled through *Dune 2* are the changes made to the control system. For any gamer worth their salt it will be nothing new, ported as it is from *Red Alert*, but compared to the fiddly old *Dune 2* interface it should be a massive improvement. Players will be able to group units so that, at the press of a key, hordes of infantry and tanks can trundle over the sand to crush the enemy base. Anyone with even a vague memory of *Dune 2* will remember how frustrating it was to manually select and direct your attack unit by unit, resulting in weak and uncoordinated attacks.

Those who already own a copy of both *Dune 2* and *Red Alert* may well ask just how different *Dune 2000* will be from the classic they know and love so well. However, the fact that Westwood are updating all the old maps is perhaps testament to their long-standing playability.

"There will be nine missions for each of the three sides, making 27 missions in total," says Lewis. "Each mission from the original game has been redesigned to take advantage of the new technology and interface used in *Dune 2000*. This should provide ▶





Where would we be without C&C?

Without *Dune 2* there might not have been *Command & Conquer*. And if it wasn't for *C&C*, where would we be? Still dragging our hairy knuckles over the ground, most likely; still shifting small inanimate sprites round chicken wire maps. And where would us jaded computer hacks be without that irreplaceable phrase of reviewers, 'the *C&C* clone'? Well it wasn't like that all the time, you know.



***Dune 2*: "What we have is a *Sim City* clone which is also a real-time shoot 'em up" – 89 per cent (Issue 1).**



***Command & Conquer*: "Let's call a spade a spade: this is *Dune 3* and bloody good it is too!" – 95 per cent (Issue 28).**

fans of the original with a new experience, even if they played through every mission in *Dune 2*. Our designers are now finishing off the process of creating alternate missions for each side to add replay value."

The redesign has also prompted a new set of cut-scenes – those old ones would never do. "Yes, each House will also have its own set of specially shot video sequences," Lewis explains. "On top of that we have brought in different actors to play the parts of the mentats (advisors) for each side, as well as the Emperor, Bene Geserit truthsayer and a few others. We have also gone in and redone the artwork for each of the sides. This way, players can distinguish and really get a feel for the Houses they have chosen."

Something new

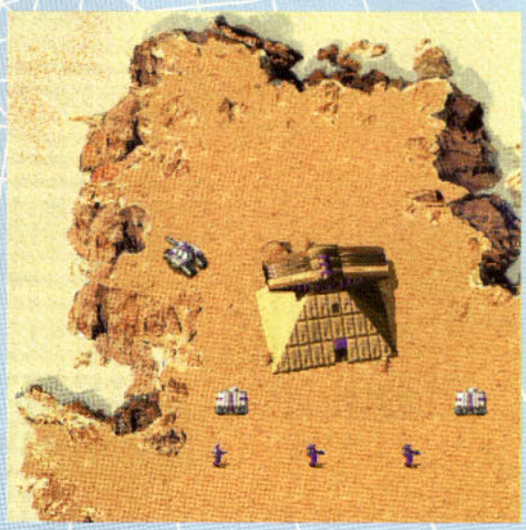
It's the multi-player element that *Dune 2* fans have been crying out for ever since *Command & Conquer* was released. Before starting a campaign, I myself have often wondered which of the three Houses would be the best in an out and out fist fight, and soon we'll all be able to find out. Lewis has always made it clear that the emphasis will remain on the diversity of the infantry units. They won't be just cannon fodder, instead they'll be harder to hit and able to dash up mountain sides via predefined routes. The idea is to keep multi-player *Dune* a very different experience from *Command & Conquer*. It seems that Westwood can't stress enough how fresh the ideas behind *Dune 2* still are: "With updated graphics, sound, special effects and multi-player capability, we expect *Dune 2000* will stand on its own. New and old players alike will get another chance to conquer the desert planet Arrakis."



With all the latest technological developments in flesh-searing weapon design, you can't get away from the fact that every building needs a firm foundation.

Product details

Developer: Westwood
Publisher: Virgin Interactive
Website: www.dune2000.com
Release date: July



The most important buildings will have to go through a few upgrades before you can churn out the top kick-ass units. The technology centre is no exception.

When three tribes go to war

When it comes to the machines with which you can wage war, *Dune 2* really had some great ones, all of which make a welcome reappearance in '98. Expect some cool explosions and smoke effects to go with the death and destruction.



TRIKE Lightly armed and coated with tin foil, this souped-up Sinclair C5 is the perfect scout for finding pockets of enemy forces and locating spice fields ripe for harvest.



CARRYALL The unarmed, Caryall is most useful for transporting harvesters to distant spice fields, so speeding up spice production. Perfect for those long-haul trips to Tesco's.



QUAD Equipped with two cannons, four wheels and a double-thick layer of tin foil. The Quad is the perfect support vehicle for beleaguered infantry.



HARVESTER The spice hoover is the resource gatherer and is central to success. It's slow, but if you hope to build up a decent army you need a couple on the go.



DEVASTATOR The biggest, baddest tank in the game – exclusive to the Harkonnens, and with dual-firing plasma cannons and plush leather interior.



MCV The MCV (mobile construction vehicle) is basically a bag of cement, a crane and two fat construction workers all rolled into one, and enables you to start work on a second base.



DEVIATOR This Ordos rocket launcher fires nerve gas that temporarily alters the allegiance of all who breathe it in – a bit like the morning after a fierce curry.



ORNITHOPTER With the thin atmosphere of Dune, Ornis are the only viable means of air attack. They're flimsy, but they pack a mean punch against lightly armoured units.

FORMULA 1 97

"FANTASTIC!! The first five places are filled by five different cars. Terrific!"



IT MAKES MORE SENSE THAN MURRAY!

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"There are 55 Bru dungeon and I'm give each and eve one of them a right good seeing to!"

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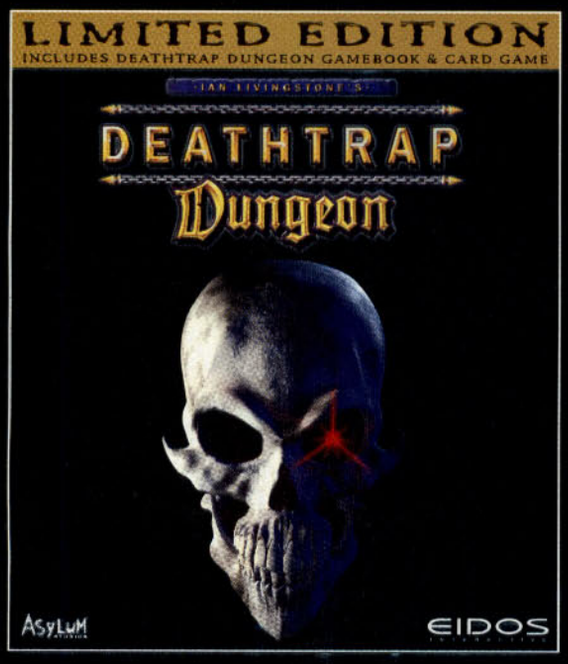
I suppose we better not mention the T-Rex...

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"it's way up there with the best"
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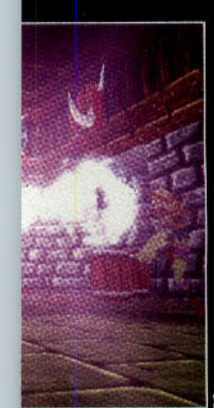
"A half naked bird, buckets of blood and rock solid gameplay...course yer gonna' like it"
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PC CD

PlayStation

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PC



PC



PLAYSTATION

XENOCRACY

Grolier Interactive are about to jump on to the space shoot 'em up bandwagon. Chris Anderson casts an eye over it and looks for stuff to get excited about.

THE LIST OF SPACE COMBAT SIMS available is almost endless – *Elite*, *Wing Commander I* to *V*, *Privateer 1* and *2*, *X-Wing*, *I-War*... – yet Grolier believe they have something new to offer the genre. Ever sceptical about such outrageous claims, we nonetheless invited them into our luxurious offices *(Yeah, right – Ed)* to demo some early code. At first glance it looked just like every other space shoot 'em up we've ever seen. It has space ships. They fly in space. They shoot each other. Up. And so it seemed that yet another hour of presentation tedium was on the cards.

Thankfully, however, as we delved further into the game, we discovered a world of political intrigue; a world of alliances broken as easily as they are forged; a world in which the future of mankind depends on your abilities to, er, keep the peace.



What?

Strange though it may sound, your initial objective in *Xenocracy* is to ensure that the four great powers in the game universe don't smash each other to a bloody pulp in their attempts to gain control of mining colonies in the solar system. Earth, Mars, Mercury and Venus are the main protagonists throughout the proceedings. You play the part of a WingToucher (yes, we know it sounds a bit camp, but they've still got time to change it – eh, Grolier?). WingTouchers are apparently elite members of the UPN peace-keeping force, and as such they are tasked with policing the area of conflict.

Your missions will depend on what's happening in the game universe at the time. For example, if Mars attacks Venus without provocation, you will be called upon to bring the blighters to justice. However, if Earth and Mercury decide to have a difference of opinion at the same time, you will then have to determine which planet you should defend, based on how much damage each of the protagonists is likely to cause.







The logic behind this is that you can't respond to every request for help, and since the general idea is to keep a balance of power between the warring factions, you will have to be clever when deciding whose hide you want to save. But fear not, the burden of decision will be shared with your commanding officers and the ambassadors of the planetary powers, so should you select the wrong mission you'll at least have someone else to point the finger at if everything goes pear-shaped. Fail too many missions, however, and the balance of power could shift to one or other of the factions, resulting in (shock horror) an all-out Solar War. The general upshot of this type of open-ended gameplay is that no two missions will ever be the same – which we know to be a very good thing. Provided the missions aren't incredibly boring, of course. Which brings us neatly to First Impressions Corner.



The graphical effects, and in particular the explosions, are all very pretty.

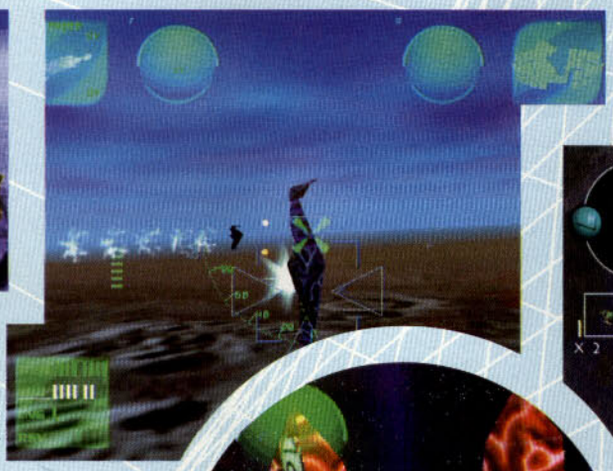
Game on

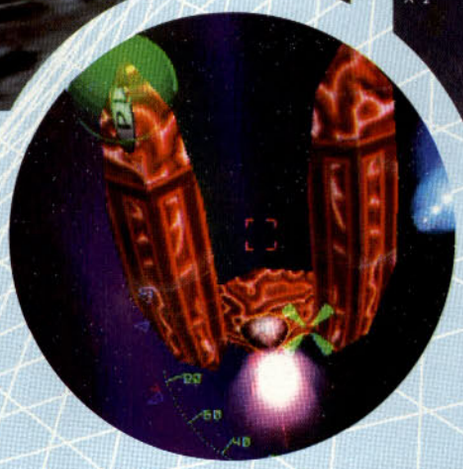
We were lucky enough to have a bash at some early preview code of *Xenocracy*, and we're happy to report that it does in fact look to be an enjoyable blast-fest of reasonable proportions. The visuals are suitably yummy, and the now almost obligatory 3D acceleration support is present and correct, giving way to shiny coloured lights bouncing off highly detailed polygon ships, gorgeous



***C&C*-style ground attack missions are a first for this type of game, although the perspective's not as claustrophobic as your average *C&C* clone, obviously.**







(Below) Players will be able to select and customise their own intergalactic spaceship with their own choice of weapons, shields, engine etc.



textures, and of course copious amounts of lens flare. The combat can best be described as an *Elite*/*X-Wing* hybrid inasmuch as the colourful polygon ships are reminiscent of *Elite*, and the full-on hectic combat will remind many of *X-Wing*'s excellent galactic dogfights. Another gameplay element that Grolier have, er, borrowed from *Elite* – and indeed *Wing Commander* – is the constant appearance of space pirates who act as cannon fodder for bored gamers and generally confuse the issue at every opportunity.

For campaign fans there are two distinctly different ways to play the game: Arcade mode is, as you would expect, an instant action blast, with your ship and weapons pre-selected and all political decisions taken care of. Simulation mode is a far greater challenge. Not only will your decisions influence the political and economic balance of the warring planets, but you'll also get to manage a research and development allocation budget, choose your own wingmen and weapons, and generally become much more involved in the great scheme of things as events in the game unfold.

> ***"Arcade mode is, as you'd expect, an instant action blast; simulation mode is a far greater challenge."***

There is no obvious storyline to follow at the beginning of the game, but Grolier have hinted at an unexpected turn of events later in the campaign which changes gameplay significantly and finally reveals your real role in protecting the future of mankind.

From what we've seen so far, *Xenocracy* looks set to be a complex and challenging space combat sim. But, as always, you'll have to wait until next month when we review the full game before we deliver our final verdict.

Product details

Developer: Grolier Interactive
Publisher: Grolier Interactive
Website: www.grolier.com
Release date: June



Xenocracy **couples** ***Elite*****-style graphics with** ***X-Wing*****esque combat, which is a good thing. Probably.**



Huge polygon spaceships are the order of the day in ***Xenocracy*****, which is nice.**

A means to an end

In the interests of total immersion and a belief that we really are saving Earth, and not just sitting in front of our PC monitors pressing buttons on a joystick, we need a plot to help our nonbelief. *Xenocracy* answers thus: the year is 10600 of the Common Era (whatever that is). Mankind has colonised space, and four superpowers have emerged – the Earth Dominion, the Mars Combine, the Venus Alliance and the Mercury League. All four may well have lived happily together were it not for the existence of a precious resource called lycosite. Lycosite is found in the outer colonies, and the superpowers spend their whole time scrapping over it. It's down to you, as a member of the United Planet Nations, to sort them all out, which sets the scene perfectly for many hours of intense intergalactic blasting. What do you mean you've heard it all before? Honestly, you just can't please some people.









M1 TANK PLATOON II

Jeremy Wells used to drive a VW Beetle that had more filler than metal. Virtually indestructible, it did 0 to 60 in an hour. Who better, then, to check out this new tank sim from MicroProse?

EVER SINCE *BATTLEZONE* (THE ORIGINAL arcade game, not Activision's action/strategy hybrid) blasted onto the scene way back in the 1970s, gamers the world over have been hooked on tank games. A decade later, when the original *M1 Tank Platoon* stormed onto the scene in 1989, it set a new benchmark for ground war simulations, winning numerous awards and a place in the hearts of dynamic war game fans. Now, almost another decade later, MicroProse are about to release the sequel, with the promise that it will blast the opposition into oblivion.

We first caught sight of *M1 Tank Platoon II* almost a year ago, at E3 in Atlanta. It was tucked away in a corner, vying for attention next to some alpha code of the glorious *Falcon 4.0*, the licence to print money that is *Starship Troopers*, and a rather different-looking *X-COM* game that we later discovered was to be called *Interceptor*. At first, we assumed we were looking at a rolling rendered sequence, something pretty that the artists had put together for the show. Closer investigation proved that what we were gawping at was, in fact, in-game code. It was quite a step up from the graphical standard of the first game, to say the least.

More recently, we were given the opportunity to sit down in front of some beta code in the company of *M1*'s original visionary and creator, Scott Spanberg, who took us through some of the earlier missions and explained why *M1 Tank Platoon II* will roll over every other tank game developed thus far.

"We want the player to appreciate what it's like to be in the middle of a war zone." – Scott Spanberg, MicroProse

From the offset, it's clear that *M1 Tank II* is very much a sim, more akin to a modern-day flight sim than something like NovaLogic's *Armored Fist II*. "We wanted to recreate the modern battlefield in exacting detail," explains Scott. "We've managed to reconstruct the M1 A2 with breathtaking accuracy, and applied the same levels of detail to other vehicles and the terrain. We want the player to appreciate exactly what it's like to be in the middle of a war zone."







The developers have tried to ensure that there's always a lot happening on the battlefield.







Players will be able to call in air support to break down the enemy, and then send in the infantry to clean things up.

From what we've seen so far, graphically *M1 Tank II* will not disappoint, as long as the now prerequisite 3Dfx card is in evidence. That said, Scott is keen to point out that unlike some other graphically charged pixel-fests, *M1 Tank II* will not be what we call at *Zone* a 'fur coat, no knickers' experience. The idea is to create a campaign world that is fully active and reactive to the player's actions. "As the player attacks and destroys enemy targets, their effects on future actions will be taken into account, just as it would in a real campaign," claims Scott. "Also, the active world is not just limited to the player's actions. Targets will also be destroyed by opposing units, and some of them will have the ability to repair themselves if they're not fully destroyed.

"Our ultimate aim is to create a dynamic environment that encourages the player to feel like he's actually taking part in an ongoing war effort. What he does, the decisions he makes and how successful he is will affect the course of future missions and ultimately the whole campaign."



Design-u-like

While the campaign mode promises to be a bit special, the single-battle mode looks to be just as immersive. Players will be able to select to fight randomly generated battles against front-line Russian forces, or opt to engage the enemy in pre-built missions based on battles fought in the Gulf War or Nato-Warsaw Pact confrontations. There will also be a Battle Builder mode that will enable players to construct and design their own battles, with several campaign areas to choose from, including North Africa, Ukraine, the Far East and Korea. Each area will be faithfully recreated in glorious 3D, and players will be encouraged to use the terrain and natural features, such as trees, for cover.

Scott's also very proud of what the team have accomplished with the game's artificial intelligence. "Success on the battlefield depends on constant reassessment of a situation and a measured reaction to the enemy's action. Players will need to communicate new orders to different units and be assured that they'll respond in the correct manner," he says. "This means the AI has to be really competent, or the whole thing just falls apart. The player's got to be able to rely on his units to follow orders, although sometimes mistakes will be made just to keep the whole thing realistic."

You're under orders

As the commander, players will be able to send detailed orders to each platoon or to individual tanks, and instruct them when to hold position, evade or engage the enemy, change formation, and call in air support in the shape of A-10s or combat helicopters. In an attempt to encourage the player to look at their war effort on a grander scale, units will actually improve with the more action they see, while vehicles that are damaged will need repairing before they can be used for further missions.

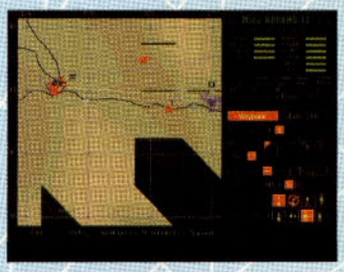
If you're thinking it could get rather complicated and messy, you'll be pleased to hear that a training mode will be included where players can learn to control an M1 A2, shoot properly, develop tactics, etc. There will also be a rather flash multimedia bit that you can delve into to get information on the numerous vehicles and weapons featured in the game.

All this, along with multi-player support over a LAN or via the Internet, and Scott's assurance that it's going to be the "best tank sim ever", should be enough to convince fans of the original and tank fans that *M1 Tank Platoon II* will be more than worth a look when it's released later this year. Z

Product details

Developer: MicroProse
Publisher: MicroProse
Web site: www.microprose.com
Release date: May

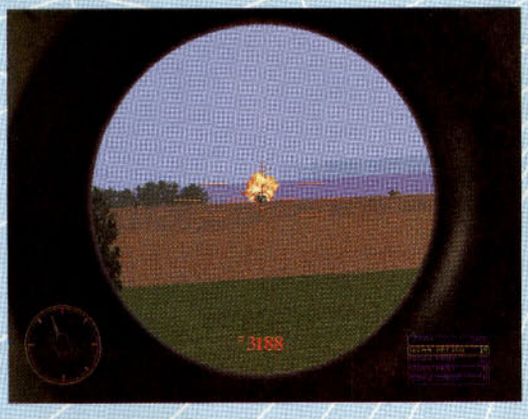


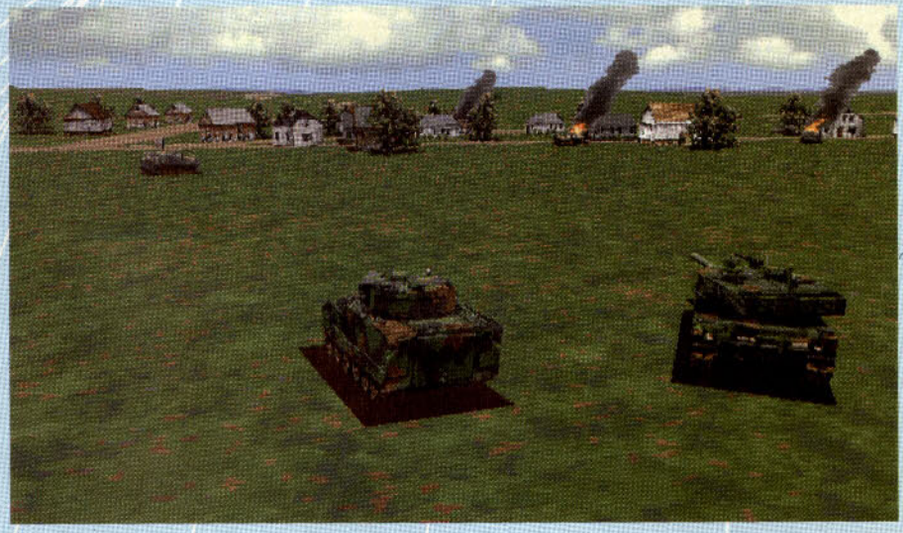


As commander, you will be able to co-ordinate your attack and leap straight back into the thick of the action to kick some ass.

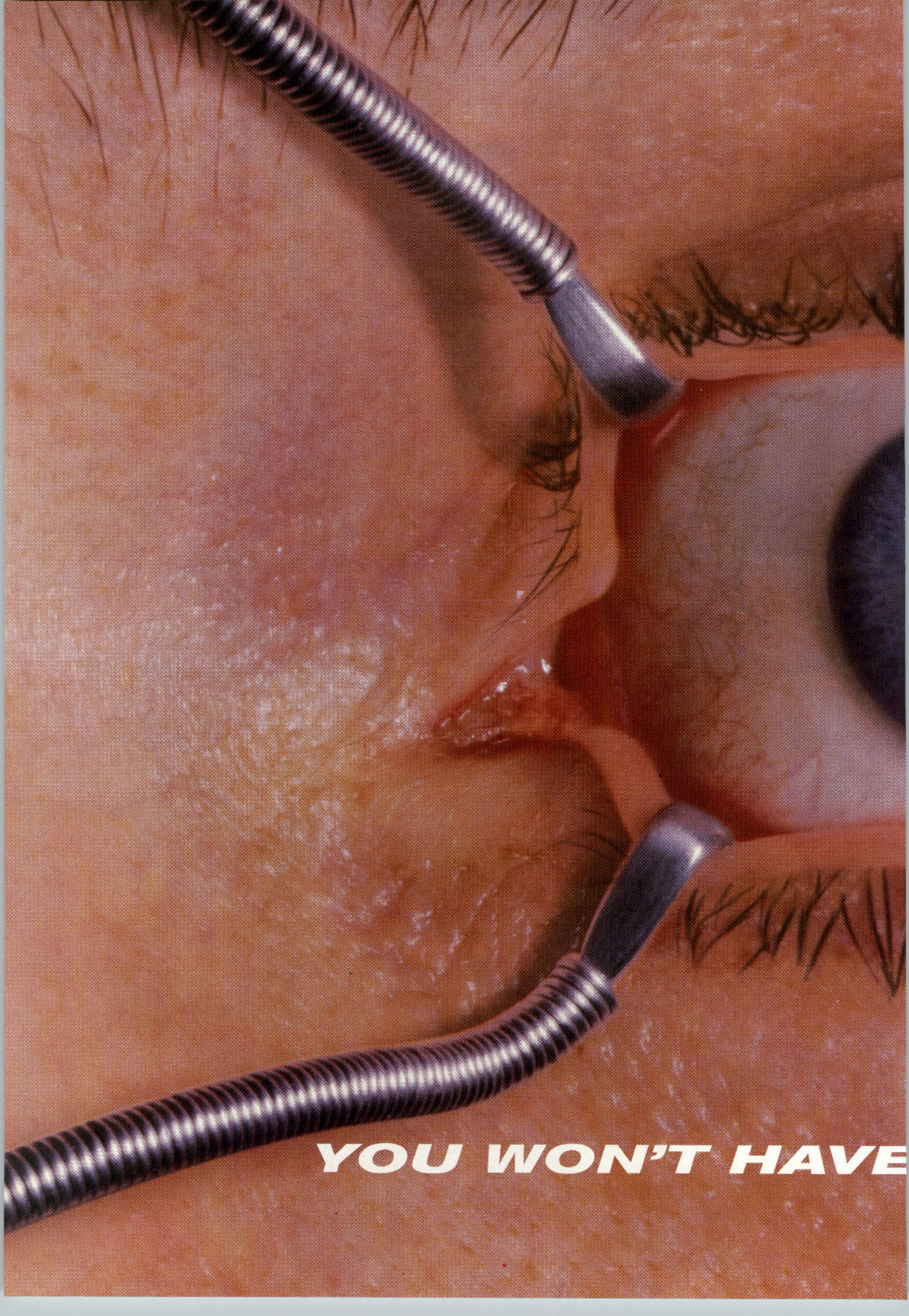


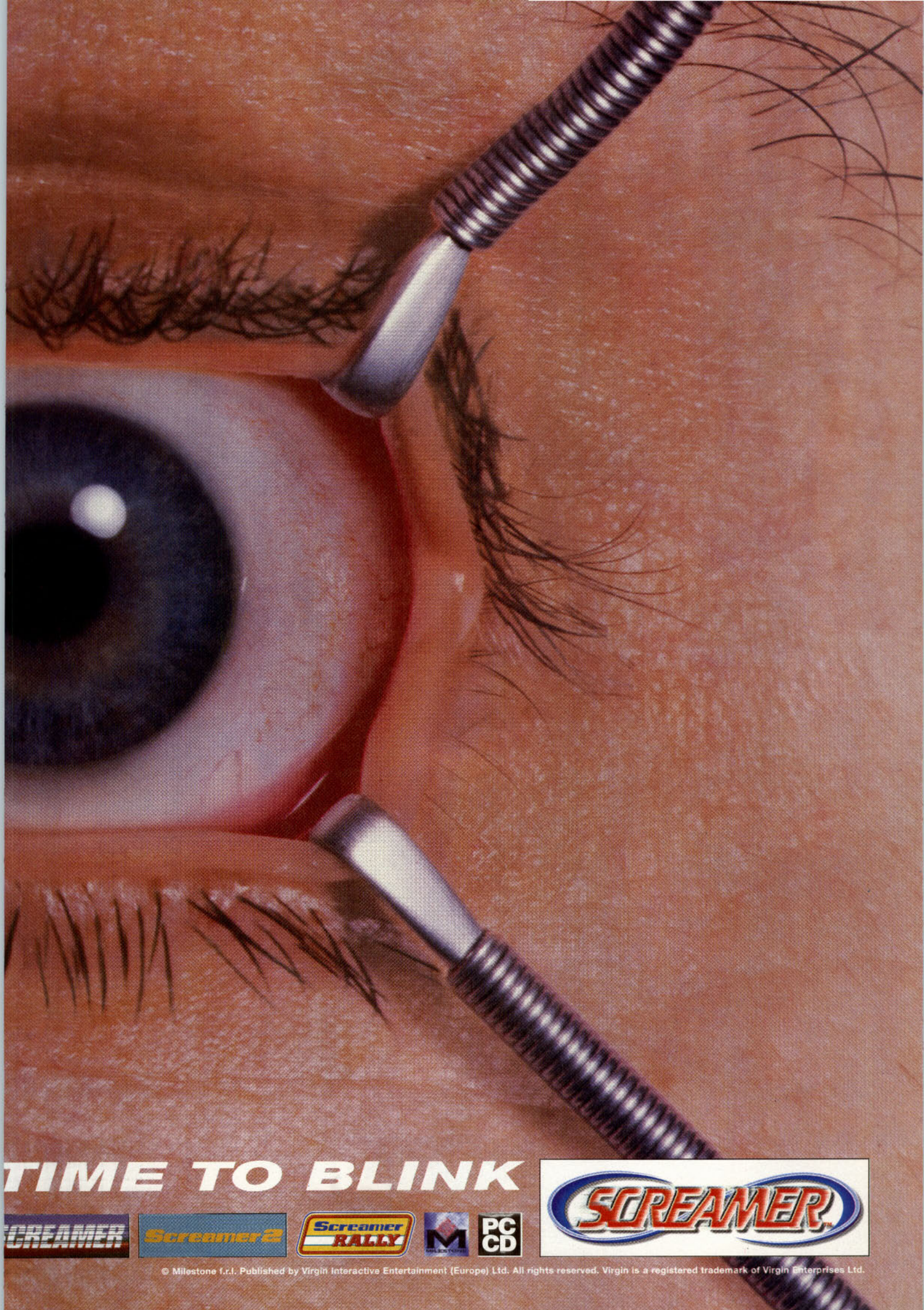
Players will have to use the terrain as cover and plan their assaults with care to succeed.





(Above) When bored, Malcolm loved wasting shells on the local wildlife. (Right) The potential for multi-player fun is quite huge thanks to five-player LAN support.


YOU WON'T HAVE



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APRIL FOOL! WIN WIN

AS WE WRITE, IT'S MARCH; AS YOU READ, IT'S MARCH. BUT ON the cover of the magazine it says April – so anything can, and often does, happen in the hilarious world of magazine April Fool japery. Yes, it's time to admit that we've duped you. We've fibbed. We've fabricated. We've lied.

In *Bulletin* this month comes news of a game that doesn't actually exist. We created it to fool you. It might look convincing, but there are subtle clues that give the game away. What we want you to tell us is which story it is. Cast your mind back. Think to yourself: am I really that gullible? Can I spot it?

Of course, it's all a bit of fun, innit? And there's gold at the end of the trail for a few lucky *PC Zone* readers. The one person who tells us which news story is bogus (and makes us laugh the hardest with their completed tie-breaker) will win a top-of-the-range, customised *Worms II* PC. Unfortunately for you though, the last laugh is on us – cos the PC is bright pink! So laughs all round, then? Must be April...



FIRST PRIZE

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Ten runner-up prize-winners will get a copy of *Worms II* plus a T-shirt.



The title of our April Fool news story is

And it can be found on page

Complete this tie-breaker in no more than fifty words:

When I show this new (bright pink) PC to my friends, they will...

Name:

Address:

Either cut out this form or photocopy it, and send it to: I've been April Fooled, PC Zone, CPCZ84A, Customer Interface, Bradley Pavilions, Bradley Stoke North, Bristol BS12 0BQ

Rules: All entries to be received by 20 April 1998. No correspondence will be entered into. The editor's decision is final. One entry per household. Repeat entries will be binned. No jeans. No trainers.

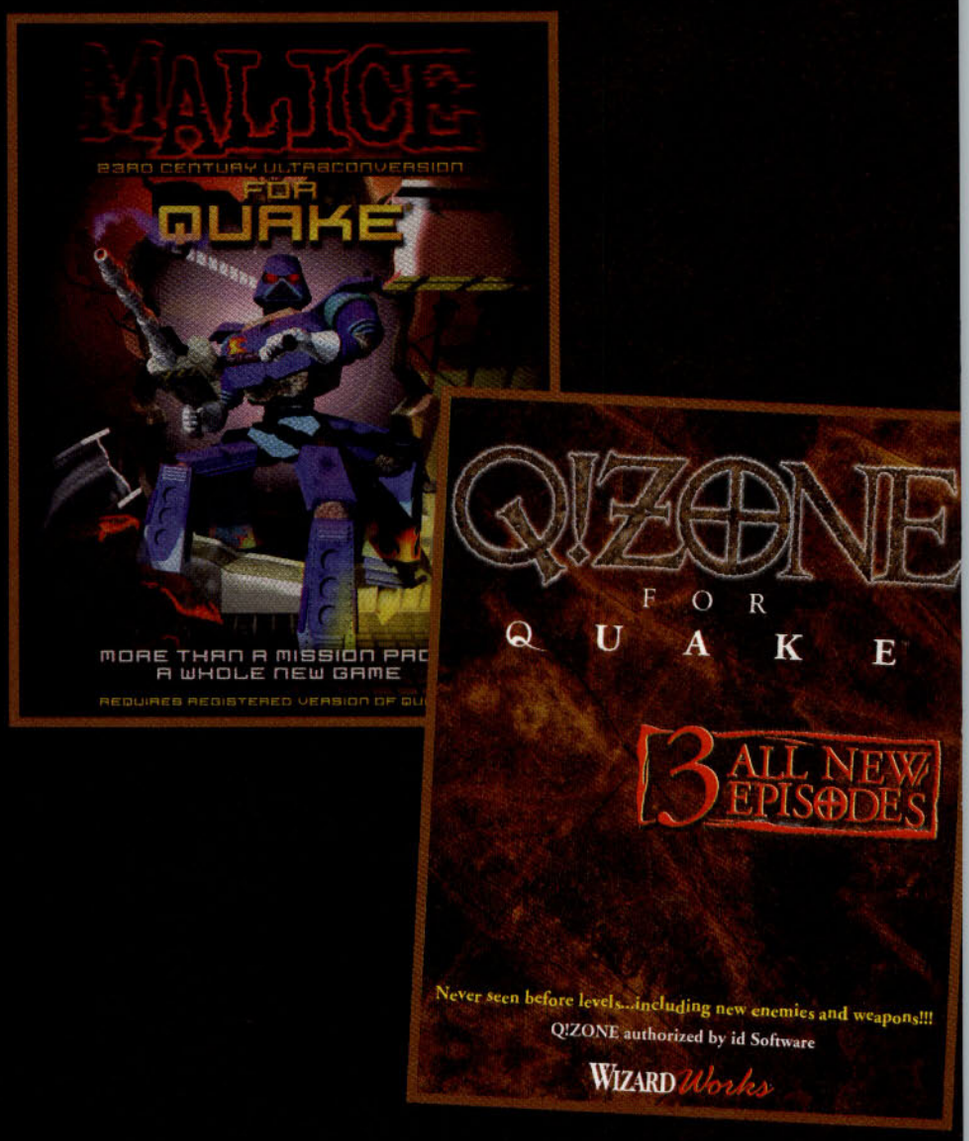
A pink PC and Worms II goodies!



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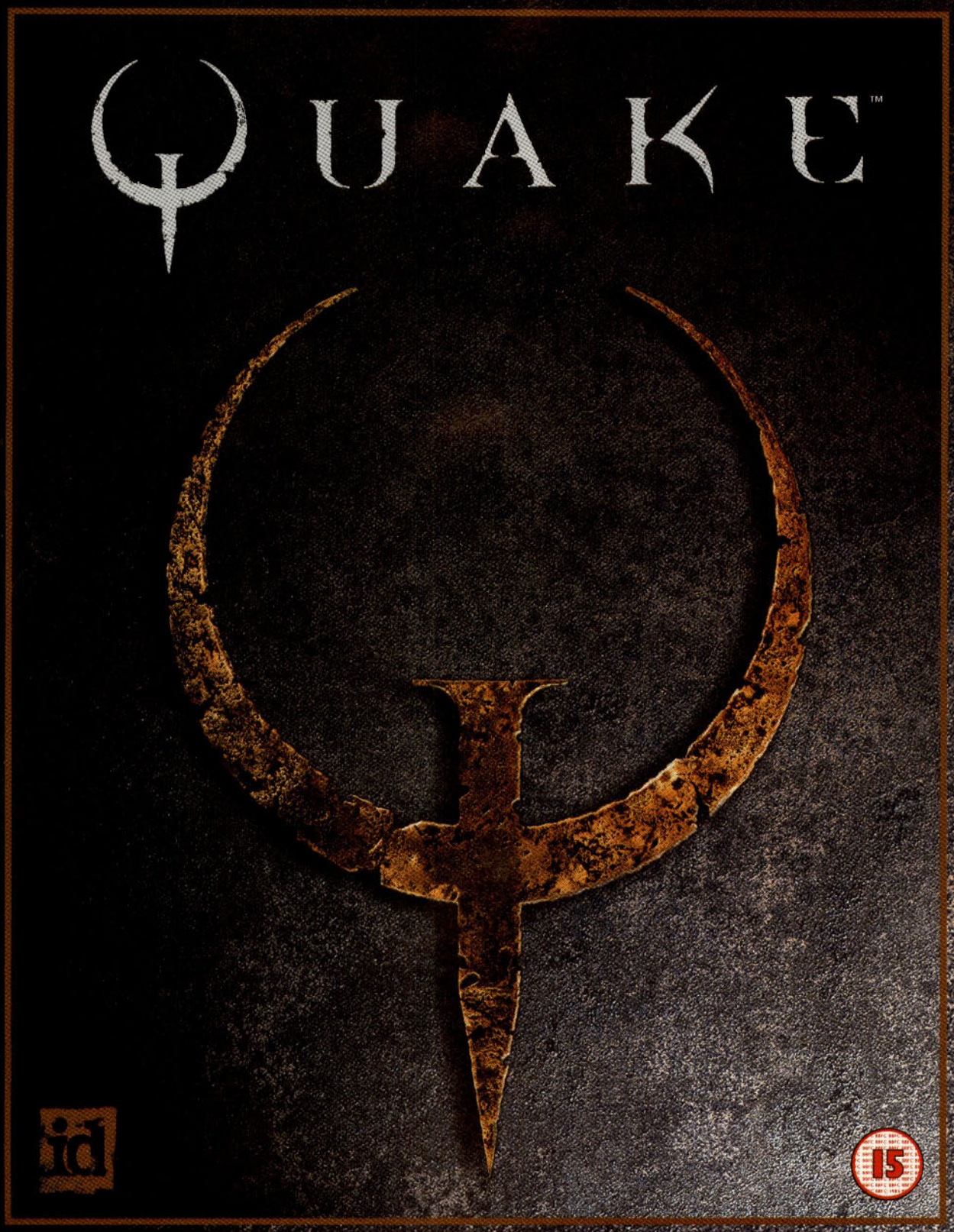
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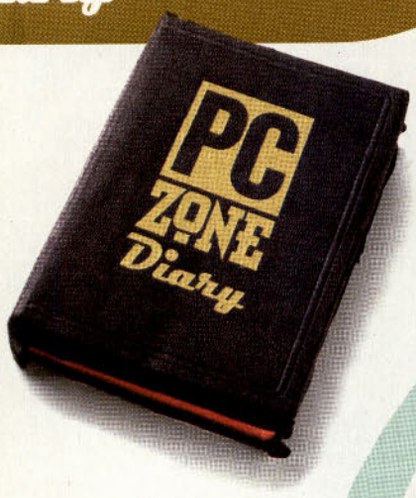
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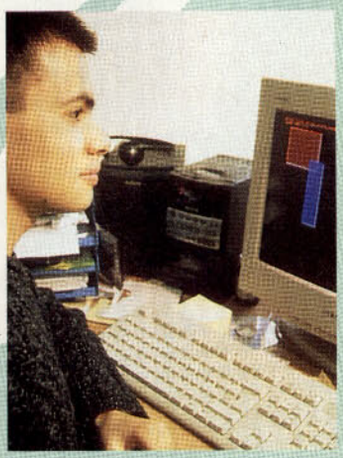




The Lionhead Diaries: Part 3
The Olympic Games

Greeting visitors, quaffing champagne and cracking code-speak. It's all in a day's work for Steve Jackson.





(Above) Demis proudly displays his bevelled box routine. (Below) Artist Mark reveals his favourite games character.



THE WORD WAS SPREADING. THOUGH Lionhead had barely got underway, there had already been plenty of interest in what we were up to. Within the first month we'd been visited by several development teams offering game designs, and some of the major players in the industry, including Sega, Eidos, Nintendo, GTI and Lego, had already called up to arrange meetings.

One lunchtime, a dozen executives from a major Japanese console manufacturer arrived in a bus to visit Lionhead's temporary office in Peter's house. Greeting them at the door, I ushered them to the patio outside and rushed back in to tell the others. Bewilderment. No one knew anything about the meeting! Peter was despatched to tactfully find out why they'd come. Apparently they'd arrived to present plans for their next-generation console. Someone somewhere had got the dates mixed up.

> ***"The rest of us agreed to offer Peter 15 Lionhead Olympics points if he could score with 'Lara'."***

But however flattering these approaches might have been, our first game was already committed. At the end of July we'd signed a one-game contract with Electronic Arts. The negotiations had been tough, with three-hour video conferences, and phones slammed down on at least a couple of occasions; our own legal bill had run to over £50,000. But in the end it was a deal we were happy with. Quite apart from the Bullfrog connection, EA are the largest PC games publisher in the world. And from their point of view, Peter had remained within the EA stable.

Originally we'd planned that Lionhead would make their first public appearance in May at the E3 trade show in Atlanta, but at that time the EA contract was still not signed. Peter was effectively still an EA employee. Thus there was the prospect of us attending E3 but not being able to say anything about Lionhead! It would all have been pointless. Consequently the E3 arrangements were cancelled at the last minute, leaving us with £3000 in bills to pay.

Our debut was postponed until September – the European Computer Trade Show in London. PR agent Cathy Campos had arranged a full ECTS appointment diary. Everyone, it seemed, wanted to know about Lionhead. From 10am to 4pm each day, journalists from most of the major European magazines arrived every half-hour at the company's suite in the Hilton hotel. Peter did most of the talking, and over the three days of the show he managed to tell the same story to 30 or so different journalists. His natural enthusiasm was truly remarkable. As each visitor received the Lionhead spiel, Peter could have been relating the story for the first time.





(Top) Steve's a bit confused by the Black And White design meeting. (Above) Cathy Campos persuades Peter not to reveal anything.

These trade shows are also memorable for their parties. At the Eidos party at the Royal College of Art, champagne was flowing all night in the VIP room. Peter split his time between talking to the president of EA Japan and chatting up the voluptuous Rhona Mitra (the 'real' Lara Croft). The rest of us agreed to offer him 15 Lionhead Olympics points if he could score with 'Lara' – with the condition that he obtained photographic evidence. Despite the generous reward on offer – LH Olympics points are more valuable than gold – Peter hasn't managed to claim his prize. Yet...

On the Sunday night, ten of us attended the ECTS Awards dinner at the Royal Lancaster Hotel. Though the food was mediocre, the people on the Lionhead table amused themselves by predicting the award winners – with Points to Count, of course. Mark Healey, our new artist, won easily. He'd simply bet on *Tomb Raider* to win everything. The victory placed him top of the new Lionhead Olympics League Table.

The League Table is now entrenched as a vital part of Lionhead culture. Everyone here is a games player, and the results of any game we play – which is agreed in advance as Points to Count – get entered. Board games, croquet, Fantasy Football, pinball, pool, squash... You name it, we'll play it, so long as it's Points to Count.

But Lionhead isn't all fun and games. There was some serious work getting done too. By now the groundwork for the project was beginning to take shape. Peter was making good progress with the 'test-bed' framework. His plan was to have a workable version of the game (a test-bed) which we can all use to test the gameplay at an early stage. Mark was completing his work on the in-game de-bugging routines, Tim had the libraries and tools sorted out, and Demis's real physics engine could now draw a bevelled box (a 3D box with angled sides. Standard Windows 95 buttons are supposed to look like bevelled boxes). Now, to me, creating a bevelled box and moving it sideways across the screen seemed no great feat. But the coders had apparently had a competition to see who could create the best bevelled box. anyway, the others seemed genuinely in awe of Demis's achievement.

Gradually I was getting used to the mumbo-jumbo of code-speak: "Once I've got a gooey (actually a 'GUI' – graphical user interface; not something from your nose), I can attach my function calls"; or "Thank God for the comma-space, that's all I can say"; or "Let's do away with round brackets entirely"... All these topics seemed incredibly important to everyone. Sure, standards needed to be set so that everyone's code would work with everyone else's. But I avoided standards meetings like the plague. Something quite simple, like where spaces would appear in the code, prompted long and heated debates.

Stuff like this makes Lionhead a unique place to work. Little games and pranks permeate into even the serious side of the business. Everything was going well. Until our first virus arrived...

Co-founder of Games Workshop, author of *Fighting Fantasy Gamebooks*, game designer and columnist for the *Daily Telegraph*, Steve Jackson is now a director of start-up Lionhead.

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HARANGUING on the telephone!!!

When it comes to customer care, most companies have a number you can call for help, but just how good are they at dealing with irate callers? Our resident schizophrenic Charlie Brooker rang four of the best and gave 'em hell to see how they'd respond.

WE'VE ALL BEEN THERE: YOU'VE JUST bought a brand new game. You've run home from the shops like Billy Whizz on steroids at a track meet... only to find that the damn thing just won't work. No matter what you try, it stubbornly refuses to 'go'. Arrrgh! So what do you do now?

The sensible answer, of course, is to call the software company who published the game. Most software houses have a pool of phone-friendly experts who'll try to lead you gently by the hand towards a workable solution. Since they know the game in question inside-out, they're likely to be able to solve your problem in minutes – most of the time, the solution is glaringly obvious (to the experts, at least).

That said, every month we receive numerous letters and e-mails from disgruntled readers who have rung software companies with complaints or technical problems, only to be fobbed off by some clueless idiot on the other end of the line. We thought we'd check out just how bad they really are, and at the same time give 'em hell to avenge all those frustrated callers who'd rung in vain. Of course, the demeanour of the calling customer greatly affects their ability to perform. Which is why we decided to put a few of the more reputable companies to the test. Adopting a variety of guises, we (well, okay, *I*) rang up a selection of technical support lines and tried valiantly to make life hell for the guy on the other end of the phone. Edited versions of the transcripts are laid out across these pages; to savour their *full* aroma, check out the audio files on one of this month's *CD Zone*.

All photography: Ollie Hewitt

Call #1: Virgin Interactive Entertainment

The first call of the day, and we adopt the guise of 'Shirty', an aggressive, ignorant thug who doesn't know the first thing about computers. The 'fault', needless to say, is completely fictional...

Shirty: 'Ello? I got a game that don't work. It's *Jedi Knight*. I bought it for me boy and it don't work.

Virgin Interactive Entertainment: Right. Are you in front of your machine?

S: No.

VIE: Well, what we'd need to do is to have a look at your DirectX drivers, make sure they're all certified.

S: 'Ow do I know if I've got that then?

VIE: Because we will talk you through it. I will talk you through what you need to do to establish that.

S: Is it a bit like that film where that stewardess is trying to land the plane?

VIE: *(Long pause)* Yeah. Well... I... I... we... *(Pause)* Yeah.

S: What time do you close?

VIE: Five o'clock.

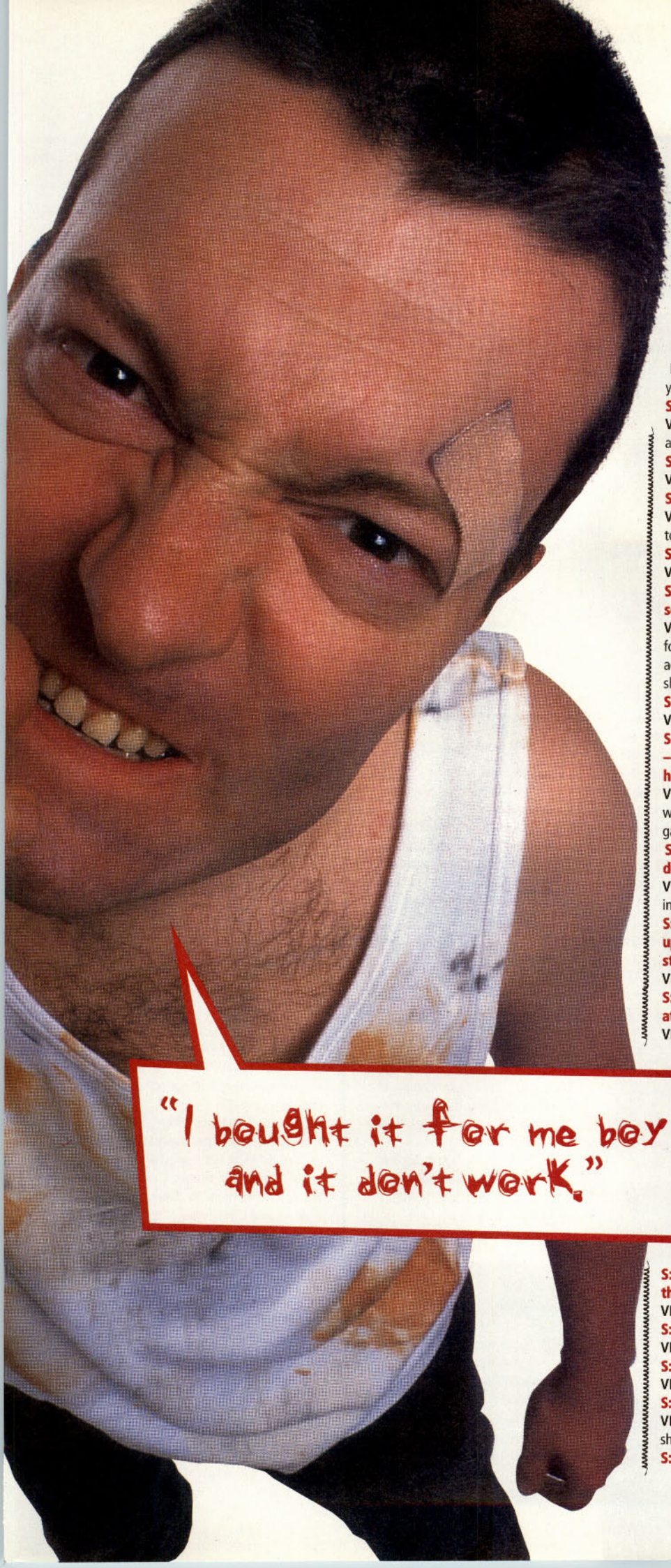
S: *(Exasperated)* Nah. Y'see, I can't get home before then.

VIE: How old is your son? Could he ring us when he gets in from school? As long as he's sitting in front of his machine and explains that he's got a problem with *Jedi Knight*, we will talk him through what he needs to do.

S: You won't upset him or nuffin?

VIE: Why would we upset him?

S: Well, you've been a bit



confrontational with me.

VIE: How have I been confrontational?

S: You raised your voice. Above the norm.

VIE: I'm sorry… that's just the way my voice is. No, I haven't raised my voice above the norm.

S: There was a slight inflection.

VIE: I don't feel I've spoken to you any differently than I've spoken to anyone else today, but no, we won't upset your son, don't worry.

S: Right, 'cos he cries easily.

VIE: All he has to do is ring us, okay, and say that he's having a problem, and we will talk him through.

S: You won't shout at him or nuffin?

VIE: No, we won't shout at him or anything.

S: *(Angrily)* I don't like it when people shout at my boy.

VIE: No… but… we… we're here to *help* you. We're not here to cause any problems.

S: You won't threaten him, or shout at him?

VIE: I haven't threatened *you* or shouted at you.

S: Nah, I know you 'aven't, but he's me boy, and he sometimes gets carried away and screams.

VIE: *We don't threaten anybody.* That's not what we're here for. If I threatened anybody I'd be sacked. My supervisor's actually sitting two yards away from me. I physically couldn't shout without him intervening.

S: You could call him over.

VIE: What? Sorry?

S: You could call your supervisor over and shout together – combined. Two voices shouting into my son's ear. Into his head and his brain.

VIE: *(Bewildered) Why? Why* would we do that? You have my word. We will not shout at your son, and the two of us will not gang up and shout at him.

S: But what if *he* starts shouting? He does sometimes do that.

VIE: *(Long pause)* Um. Well, obviously, um, we need someone in front of the computer to, um…

S: Fing is, the phone's downstairs and the computer's upstairs. He'll have to keep running up and down the stairs. So he'll *have* to shout – so that you can hear him.

VIE: Right, then we'll understand that…

S: If he puts you on the phone speaker, will you shout at him so he can hear you upstairs?

VIE: If that's what he wants us to do, yes.

S: You *will* shout at my son?

VIE: *(Exasperated sigh)* No, no. We… Look. You say if he puts the phone on the speaker, would we shout to be heard? No. All I'll do is talk at the normal voice that I'm talking to you in now. You have my word for it. What I'll do is make sure that everyone here knows that he's going to call, and that they'll treat him correctly.

S: No shoutin' at him?

VIE: No shouting.

S: Unless he asks.

VIE: Yep.

S: Right. Could you write that down and put it up on the wall there?

VIE: Yes.

S: In red?

VIE: Yes.

S: In *pretty* text?

VIE: Yeah.

S: And draw a *snowman* under it?

VIE: Why would… *(Sighs)* Look. We'll make sure no one shouts at your son.

S: Much obliged.

VIE: Okay then.
S: I love you.
VIE: Okay then. Goodbye.
S: Bye.

VERDICT: 10 OUT OF 10
Consistently helpful, despite escalating weirdness on our part, the man from Virgin deserves a medal for his relentless patience. He was also utterly polite throughout the conversation, and didn't get riled even *once*. Hey, Virgin – go and give this man a hefty pay rise, we say. He's a credit to your company.

Call #2: Activision

Another job for 'Shirty', who by now has plucked up enough courage to start indulging in 'blue' language. Again, the 'fault' is entirely imaginary...

Shirty: 'Ello. If I've got a problem with *Quake II*. Do I call you about it?
Activision: If you've got a problem getting the game running, yeah. What's the problem?
S: Well, like you said. I can't get it running. It goes to start and the intro comes up and that, and then it all flickers and goes back to Windows. Frankly, I'm well pissed off about it. Y'know, I spent about 30 quid on this thing and it don't work.
A: Right. Okay. You might have to do a few alterations to get it running. Have you got your system in front of you?
S: No, but I can tell you what it is. It's a Pentium 166, yeah, it's got 1000 megabytes of RAM...
A: That's hard disk space.
S: Nah, it's RAM. They said it was 1000 megabytes of RAM. The hard disk's 32.
A: Who said it was that? Whoever told you that got it the wrong way round. The RAM is 32 and the hard disk is the...
S: Look, I don't give a ** about the details. Frankly, I just want to get the game running, mate.**
A: Alright, sure. So I take it the machine's at home and you're at work? Right. Just write this down for a second. Have you got a pen and paper?
S: *(Impatiently)* Well, *yeah*.
A: Okay...
Click on 'Start'...
S: What, now?
A: No, no. When you get home. Click on 'Start', then click on 'Find', then 'Files or Folders'...
S: Which one? Files or Folders?
A: Well, it just says 'Files or Folders'. It's just the one icon.
S: Yeah, but which one?
A: You don't get an option.
S: Well why are you telling me to do it if there's no option?
A: No, look. Basically there's an icon there called 'Files or Folders'. You click on *that*, and it gives you the option to...

S: Oh! I get it. So it's only one thing that you click on, yeah? Sorry, mate. You must think I'm a right **.**
A: *(Pause)* So when you click on that, it asks you for something to look for, and you type in 'DXSETUP' and then press 'Return'. That will bring up a little icon. Click on that and it'll take you into your subsystem.
S: What's that?
A: Um... it's basically something that um... which will show you whether your drivers are...
S: *(Very impatiently)* Alright, alright. Just tell me how to make it *work*.
A: Okay... When you double-click on that, when it brings up your subsystem...
S: Oh for ***'s sake*!**
A: What's the matter?
S: Well, I've dished out 30 quid for this, and now I've got to faff around on the phone, I've got to write down instructions and go off and carry them out... It's like being in the ***** *army*. When I buy something for the Super Nintendo fing, I just stick it in and it comes up on the telly and everything...**
A: Well that's because Nintendo games are slightly less advanced than PC games, and you might have to do a bit of tinkering around.
S: Oh *lah di dah*.
A: At the end of the day, I'm just telling you what to do.
S: Alright. I'm sorry, mate. It's just that I got this for me boy's birthday and now it don't work. You can imagine the poor bastard. He can't play his game. And I'm no computer expert. Tell you the truth, it's not really my computer. Know what I'm sayin'?
A: I appreciate it, because I've got the same problems...
S: Well why are you working there, then? You should be out tilling the fields or something.
A: Well, you just have to fix them. You'll have to see if your DirectX drivers are certified.
S: And if they aren't?
A: You'll have to get hold of these little pieces of software. Are you connected to the Internet?

S: I don't know. I think the bloke who had the computer before me might have been. He don't know I've got his computer, basically. D'you know what I'm sayin'?
A: Does it run on anyone else's machine?
S: Yeah. It's nothing wrong with the CD. I'm not stupid. Do you think I'm stupid?
A: Well, no. You've bought a product and you expect it to work. I can appreciate that.
S: Don't you think it should be sorted out before I lay out the money for it? *If* I'd laid out the money for it, which I didn't.

> "You've got a touch of mystique about you, if you don't mind me saying."

Frankly, I thieved it. But if I *had* laid out money for it I'd be really annoyed. As it is I'm mildly tickled, you know?
A: Yeah, well... what can I say?
S: I don't know. What do you want to say?
A: Well, what's done is done.
S: Yeah? Sorry, hold on... 'What's done is done, he said yesterday.'
A: Who said that?
S: *You* did. Just then. 'What's done is done, he said yesterday', beneath your photograph, yeah? That's our caption.
A: Eh? I don't get what you're going on about.
S: S'alright. Don't matter. Anyway, if I do all that stuff you said, it'll work, yeah? That's great, innit? If I want to write a letter and complain, who's the ** in charge?**
A: The *company* in charge? Well, complaints are sent to iD Software. They're accessible through e-mail.
S: What the **?! 'Accessible through e-mail'? You might as well tell me to send a ******* *carrier pigeon* or something! What's 'accessible through e-mail'?**
A: The complaints department.
S: Well that's my first complaint. How come they're accessible through e-mail when I don't know what that *means*? Can't I just speak to them, man to man? Is there somewhere I can walk in and I get some ** behind a desk and I can just ******* speak to him?**
A: Er, no, basically.
S: Well where is this 'iD' place, then?
A: In America.
S: Oh for ***'s sake*! So I've got to go all the way to *America* if I ain't got this e-mail thing? Why don't I just send 'em a postcard, saying: 'Here I am in Britain, having bought your game, ripped off, wish you were here, signed some ******* poor old sod'?**
A: Well, it'd be quite a laugh, yeah.
S: If I thieve another computer, d'you reckon I could get it working?



A: If you nick another computer?
S: That's what I said.
(Lengthy, uncomfortable silence…)
S: Alright, mate. Well, look, I'll call these ID people and tell 'em I spoke to you.
A: Can I take your number?
S: My number?
A: Yeah, just so I can log the call.
S: Nah. Bye.

VERDICT: 10 OUT OF 10
Again, an incredibly helpful man with the patience of a saint. Despite facing a barrage of offensive language, the guy from Activision was prepared to help us out to the last… until we started going on about stolen computers, that is. Give that man more money, say we.

Call #3: Eidos Interactive

Aha. Time to change tack a little. For Eidos Interactive, we decided to transform into 'Flirty', a posh-sounding chap with an entirely provocative demeanour…

Flirty: Hello. I've got a problem with *Tomb Raider II*. I get up to the level with the Opera House, and Lara jumps in the air and the screen corrupts.
Eidos: I haven't seen this happen. Um… is it any particular place in the Opera House?
F: Well, there's some sandbags that fall down…
E: What sort of system are you running on?
F: It's a Pentium 166, with 32 megabytes of RAM and a 3Dfx card. I haven't had problems with anything else.
E: Right…
F: She turns *green*. Green about the gills, you might say. She looks most sickly.
E: Yeah. What video mode are you running in?
F: Full-screen, 3Dfx.
E: Have you got the computer there?
F: I don't, no.
E: Right. Well, this is not a known problem. What we're going to have to do is try and suss out exactly what's causing it from scratch…
F: Whereabouts are you based?
E: Birmingham.
F: If I was to drive up there, maybe tonight, could I come and meet you?
E: It, er…
F: You, in person?
E: It, er, wouldn't be possible, I'm afraid. We wouldn't be covered for that sort of thing if anything was to happen.
F: What?
E: With the actual system.
F: Oh, I thought you meant anything untoward. Between the two of us.
E: No, just anything with the system itself…
F: Well, you could come down here. I've got a spare room…
E: Erm, that wouldn't really be possible, I'm afraid. What we could maybe do… What video hardware do you have there? If we could get the full specifications…
F: Do you go dancing?
E: No… If you could find out the make of the video card…
F: Well, it's a Matrox something or other. A Millennium, or… What's the other one?
E: Mystique.
F: You've got a touch of 'mystique' about you, if you don't mind me saying.
E: Er, okay…. What we need to do is get the full specifications…
F: Full specifications. *(Pause)* I wonder what your 'specifications' are…
E: Yeah. Just the full specs of the machine.
F: Okay, and maybe if I phone later – it's probably not possible *tonight*, but maybe I could come up next week and we could all go dancing.
E: No, that wouldn't be possible, I'm afraid.
F: We could strip to the waist and spray water across each other's chests.
E: Is this a prank call?
F: No. *(Long pause)* Anyway… if I phone back with the specifications…
E: *(Pause)* Yeah.
F: *(Slowly and deliberately)* We can go *dancing together*.
E: I'm afraid I'm going to have to end the call there. Sorry about that.

VERDICT:
9 OUT OF 10
Dealing with 'Flirty' must have been hard work, and this chap from Eidos was the only one in our 'survey' to actually hang up on us. Still, to be fair, we did push him *much* too far. Our 'dancing' offer still stands; although we suspect he'd rather dance on Flirty's head. With a big pair of boots on.

Call #4: BMG Interactive

Seeing as we hadn't actually managed to really wind anyone up, we thought we'd change tack again and ring BMG Interactive's marketing department to complain about the nature of *Grand Theft Auto*. Surely they'd crack when confronted with a verbal lashing from 'Outraged' of Surbiton, Surrey?

Outraged: I'm calling about this… well, I suppose you could *call* it a game. The car-riding game?
BMG: *Grand Theft Auto*, sir?
O: Yes, that's the one. I just want some kind of explanation out of you people as to what on *earth* you think you're playing at.
B: Concerning the content of the game?
O: Yes. It's a *nightmare*!
B: Yes, it's rated 18. It's purely for adults.
O: Right, well you tell this to my son.
B: Well, it's strictly an 18-rated game. It's aimed at adults – and I stress aimed at adults.
O: Yes, well there's plenty of aiming your *car* at adults in the game, isn't there?
B: Yes, that's correct, sir. But like I…
O: The thing is, I think you people don't understand. You sit there in your ivory towers, churning out this *vile filth*… It's a *disgrace*!
B: It's aimed at the adult market, sir.
O: Well, my son has now got hold of it. What are you going to do, come round and cleanse his brain?
B: No… Well, if he has got hold of one, it's against the law. He should not have it. The game is strictly rated 18. It says so on the box…
O: *(Mimicking childishly, in a 'nyaah, nyaah, voice')* Oh, because it *says so on the box*.
B: And… and on the disc.
O: Because it *says so on the box and on the disc*.
B: Yes, sir.
O: *(Still mimicking)* Yes, sir. ▶



The man at the end of the line

What's it like taking calls from irate callers all day? We asked one of the chaps at Virgin a few searching questions...

PC ZONE: What kind of training are you given?

VIRGIN: Well, I will say that the training given to all of the operators here at VIE is essentially 'free range'... By this I mean that each of the guys is given lots of room to research and instigate their own support methods, and we'll normally have a brainstorming session from time to time to share our views about current industry 'happenings' – for example, the introduction of Windows 95 a few years ago.

However, there are a few basic rules that need to be learned, such as being courteous when taking a call, etc, and learning the systems which we have in place to deal with the queries that we receive.

For an operator, it should take six months or so to become fully experienced in the ways of a 'Virgin'. Oh, and another thing, and this is guaranteed: you will learn to have the patience of a saint.

PC ZONE: What's the worst call you've ever had?

VIRGIN: Mmm... I don't think we've ever had a clear winner here, but there have been times when a few calls have left us baffled. For example, there was one from a Scottish lad who was completely off his tree, one from a Welsh fellow who bought *Yoda Stories* and wanted us to explain The Force to him... oh, and one from a chap who rang and said: 'What's your number?' To which we replied: 'Well, what number have you just dialled?' To which he replied: 'Oh yeah! Thanks.' And then he put the phone down. Finally, there was one from this guy who asked us not to shout at his son. Very strange, we thought...

PC ZONE: What can people do to help you out when they call?

VIRGIN: This is an easy one to answer. If a customer does need to call us, then before doing so they should be fully intimate with the system that they have purchased and the hardware it contains. A lot of our time is taken up when we'll ask a specific question concerning their PC – for example: 'Which video card do you have?' – and we're met with a blank answer. It's incredible to find that someone will spend around £1500 on a computer system and not know essentially what they are purchasing. My advice is to ask the retailer for a detailed list of the equipment inside your PC.

PC ZONE: What's the most common complaint you get, and how do you deal with it?

VIRGIN: At this moment in time, the major cause for the calls that we take is Microsoft's DirectX. Since the upgrade from 3 to 5, it has become apparent that a lot of PCs out there do not have compatible drivers on their system. Normally we have to direct the customer back to their hardware supplier or the device manufacturer themselves. Thankfully though, with the supply of new drivers, this problem now seems to be sorting itself out.



B: Well it shouldn't be in his hands.

O: It isn't in his hands. It's on his screen, in his eyes, in his brain. What am I supposed to do when my son goes out in his car pulling wheelies over policemen's heads? He's been in trouble before. He committed a minor car-related offence last year, in which three people were injured.

B: Yes...

O: *(With grave authority and menace)* Now. You tell me. *What am I supposed to do about this*?

B: *(Voice shaking)* Ummmm... all I can say is...

O: You're quivering.

B: Yes. Because I'm a temp here.

O: I see. Well if you're a temp there, I have no argument with you.

B: No, I *have* dealt with the game all the way through... All I can say is don't let him play it.

O: What am I supposed to do? Break his fingers? Blind him with a red-hot poker? Throw his computer out of the window? Smash his legs? What?

B: Confiscate the disc.

O: Confiscate the disc. *(Pause)* Actually, that's not a bad idea. I might well *do* that.

B: Well, after all, it is your household, and he is your child.

O: Yes, well, pardon my French, but I think it's a ***** *disgrace.***

B: It's a game aimed at adults.

O: Don't you think it's a ***** disgrace?**

B: No. I actually quite enjoy playing the game.

O: And what about the sexual content of the game?

B: Whi... which sexual content would that be?

O: All the obscene language about *pussy* this and ** that; **** this and *balls* that; *shit*, and *piss*, and...**

B: Well, it *is* an 18-rated game...

O: Well how would you like it, *cock*? In your face?

B: *(Quivering again)* It's an 18-rated game, sir...

O: What about the hard-core pornographic sex?

B: There's nothing that actually...

O: Well there is on *his*. Look, I don't know if that was your game, but it was on his *computer*...

B: Well... I mean... um...

O: Look. I don't have any argument with you *personally*. I know you personally haven't sat down and written the game with a... computer pen or whatever they do these things with, but couldn't you pass on a message from me to the man who wrote it?

B: If you'd like to make a formal complaint in writing, we could handle that.

O: Yes, but couldn't *you* just write something down for me, and pass it on to your superior?

B: Our superior isn't actually in today.

O: Well, precisely. Write it down and it to him, man. For *God's sake*.

B: Okay.

O: Got a pen? Okay. Right. 'It's a ***** disgrace.'**

B: Right.

O: Right. Okay then. My name's Daniel Benweathers. Thank you.

B: Thank you.

O: No, thank *you*. Alright?

B: Yes.

O: Okay then. Goodbye.

VERDICT: 8 OUT OF 10

How this man resisted the temptation to slam the phone down is beyond us. And lest you laugh at his reaction, ask yourself how *you'd* have coped under similar circumstances. Despite our repeated shrieks, screams and salvos of bad language, he stuck to his guns throughout. He deserves a stiff drink.

Our 'conclusion'

As our extensive research shows (we did ring other helplines, but shortage of space dictates that we can only include the best here in print), people at the end of the line are generally very helpful, supportive and incredibly patient human beings. All the tech support people we called were *extremely* good at dealing with our irate and awkward phone calls. Not one of them lost their temper, raised their voice or started mocking us back. So if you're having problems with a game, we suggest you give the relevant helpline a ring and explain as simply as possible what's wrong. Try to have your PC near you when you call, and be patient – *they* have to be! If you're tempted to call them up and be a bit silly, our advice is not to bother. They'll see you coming – and they *certainly* won't get wound up.

It can't be an easy job, but it *is* an important one. So next time your game doesn't work, before you vent your frustrations on the guy at the other end of the line, spare a thought for his feelings. After all, he's on your side, right? Right.

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Review ZONE

This month

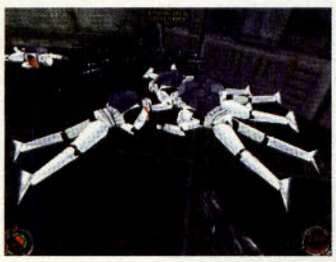


LucasArts strike back with a new breed of 3D action game, iD make amends, and the whole office goes mad over another pretty driving game. Allow Jeremy Wells to explain...

JUST WHEN WE WERE BEGINNING TO BECOME A LITTLE jaded with deathmatch *Quake II*, iD went and released the *Point Release* and now everybody is happy again. The thing is, how long will it last? This month's cover game, *Mysteries Of The Sith*, which is essentially just an add-on pack for *Jedi Knight*, has proved that while *Quake II* might sport a quicker engine, when it comes to single-player gameplay LucasArts appear to have taken the lead in terms of level design, immersion and scripting. As a single-player experience, we always championed the original *Jedi Knight* over its numerous rivals. Now that LucasArts have tidied up the engine, tweaked the AI and introduced some new graphical effects, *Sith* is undoubtedly the new benchmark for 3D action games.

That said, we were recently privy to a pre-release version of *Unreal* (again), and the character modelling and level of detail was particularly impressive – better than anything else we've seen, in fact. *Half-Life* is also shaping up very nicely, as are *SiN* and *Blade*. And who'd write off *Duke 4* or *Daikatana*? One thing is becoming increasingly clear, however, and that is that people don't want more *Quake* clones, but they do want more *Quake*. Simply put, why would any developer bother competing with what is essentially the industry standard of first-person 3D action games? If developers want to compete and take the genre to the next level, more attention must be devoted to other areas such as character development, scripting and level design, and less on fancy lighting effects and MOR soundtracks. LucasArts seem to have realised this. Let's hope that Ion Storm, Apogee, 3D Realms, Gremlin, Sierra and Ritual Entertainment are also pulling in the same direction.







Another major plus point must go to LucasArts and publishers Virgin for putting the RRP for *Sith* at a very affordable £19.99. Sure, you need *Jedi Knight* to run the game, but it's still a very reasonable price to say the least. Thumbs aloft to MicroProse also, for pricing their *Ultim@te Race Pro* so keenly. It quite clearly worked for Virgin with *Screamer*, which cleaned up last year, and *Race Pro* will probably fly off the shelves, unlike the more conservatively priced *Red Line Racer*. You may be able to get away with 40 quid for a full-on sim/arcade experience like *F1 97*, but when it comes to arcade racing games 20 quid makes much more economic sense to us and the punter. Other publishers please take note.

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Scoring system

90+ CLASSIC

The highest accolade a game can attain. Not only is it innovative and highly original, but it's extremely playable and has masses of long-term appeal. Games that receive the 'Classic' award should be seen as a benchmark with which to compare other games of the same genre.

80–89 RECOMMENDED

An excellent game that simply lacks that certain something to make it a gaming classic. It may not be necessarily highly original, but it contains some new ideas and variations that add to the genre that are well implemented. Well worth checking out.

70-79

If a game scores within this bracket it's good, but not good enough to be recommended. It's not exactly original and somebody's probably done it better already, but it's still playable all the same. Basically, it's worth shelling out for, especially if you're a big fan of the genre, but don't expect anything innovative. Whatever you do, don't discount games just because they don't quite hit the recommended mark!

50-69

Games that fall into this bracket are distinctly average and don't really offer anything new. There's nothing much wrong with these titles, but then there's nothing much to recommend them either. They're just average. Okay. Not bad. Alright. We've seen it all before. A lot better on budget. You get the picture.

40-49

Okay, so you're not really going to buy this, are you? We'd advise you not to. It's below average, it's not very playable, you'll probably be disappointed. It had a few nice ideas, but they were badly executed. Give it a miss.

21-39

Oh dear. This should never have got past the ideas stage. It offers absolutely nothing new to the genre, is very limited in terms of gameplay, frustrating to play and ultimately a complete waste of money. Avoid disappointment. Avoid this game.

20 AND BELOW PANTS

Absolutely bloody awful. Unplayable, due to bad design or bugged code. Crap with a capital 'C'. Naff with a capital 'N'. Do not buy this game, it will ruin your life and all those who come into contact with it. It doesn't get much worse than this. Have we made ourselves clear?

In Perspective

This is designed as a purely visual guide to how games of a similar style compare. The bars do not relate to previous review scores... they are simply an indication of how the reviewer feels about the products on a sliding scale.

Game 1

Game 2

ATI 3D Native Version Available

3DBLASTER Native Version Available

3DFX Native Version Available

DIAMOND STEALTH Native Version Available

MATROX MYSTIQUE Native Version Available

POWERVR Native Version Available

The software is designed to take advantage of **D3D**

The software is designed to take advantage of **MMX**

This software will only run under **WINDOWS 95**

The software may run slowly, especially in hi-res mode

The software supports **MICROSOFT DIRECTINPUT**

The software supports **MICROSOFT DIRECTPLAY**

The software supports **INTERNET PLAY**

The software will run acceptably on a **486DX2/66**

THE BENCHMARK PC

At ***PC Zone*** all games are played and tested on a **DAN Technology Pentium 133** with 16Mb RAM, a 2Mb graphics card and a quad-speed CD-ROM drive. We also use Maxi Gamer 3Dfx cards for releases that support D3D and 3Dfx specific games.



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Just bought a game and the damn thing doesn't work? Ring the appropriate tech support line for help and advice on how to get your game running...

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VIRGIN	0171 368 6000
BMG	01429 855046
GREMLIN	0114 279 9020
ELECTRONIC ARTS	01753 546 465
OCEAN	0161 827 8061
UBI SOFT	0181 944 9000
TAKE 2	01753 686655
PSYGNOSIS	0151 282 3000
EIDOS	0121 356 0831
INTERPLAY	01628 423 723
SIERRA/CUC	0118 920 9111
MICROPROSE	01454 893900
GT INTERACTIVE	01923 209145
MICROSOFT	0870 5010100
EMPIRE	0181 343 9143

THANKS THIS ISSUE TO:

Everyone we annoyed researching our tech support feature.
Brian Baglow @ DMA
Martin Bramall @ Gremlin
Steve McGill @ Text 100
Kate Ludgrove @ Creative Labs

Cool games

We see hundreds of games over the months but there are a few that we hang on to and continue to play at lunch-time/when we're supposed to be doing more important stuff...



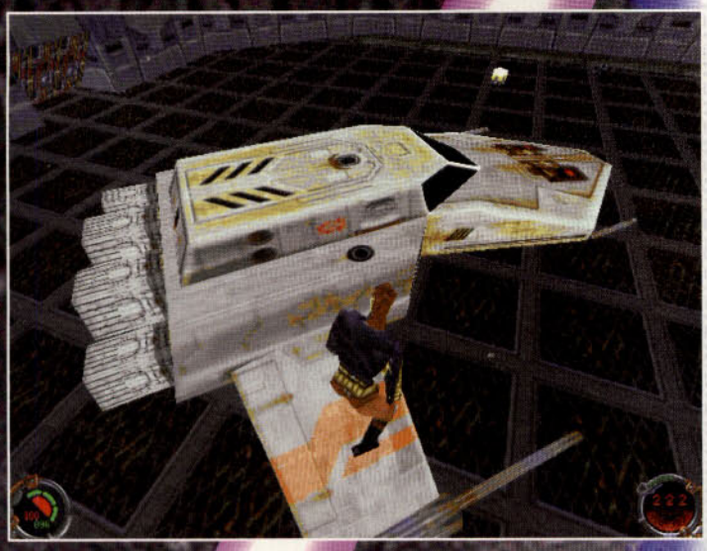
- **Mysteries Of The Sith**
- **Fallout**
- **Ultim@te Race Pro**
- **The Golf Pro**
- **Quake II**

Crap games

There are some games that you can leave in the middle of the room with a big sign next to them saying "Please steal me" and you still can't get rid of the bloody things...



- **Sabre Ace**
- **Zapitalism Deluxe**
- **Lemmings Paintball**
- **AHX-1**
- **Powerboat Racer**





PC ZONE Classic



(Main figure) Mara Jade was once a Dark Jedi assassin, smuggler and Jedi Knight-in-training under Emperor Palpatine. Is she a serious threat to Lara Croft's popularity?



Jedi Knight: Mysteries Of The Sith



Before embarking on this second dangerous *Jedi* adventure, Paul Mallinson had to 'unlearn' everything he'd learnt so far. Which explains the poor grammar in his review.

WITHOUT DOUBT ONE OF *THE* GAMES OF last year, LucasArts' *Jedi Knight: Dark Forces II* blew minds the world over. Its incredibly designed levels and authentic *Star Wars* atmosphere even had me thinking: "You can keep your *Quake II* – iD's game designers are good, but LucasArts' are better." That's right, it blew my mind too. With its complex and involving plot drawing the player into a world of mytho-techno combat modelled around George Lucas's famous 'can't fail' branding, how *could* it fail? Take it from me: it *rocked*. And now we have a sequel: *Mysteries Of The Sith*. And guess what? You'll no doubt be pleased to hear that it rocks too.

(Above) This is the easy bit! (Right) These hideous octopus-like creatures have a sting in their tail. Two hits and you're dead.



Where to start?

Mysteries Of The Sith begins five years after the first game, and finds Kyle Katarn (the original geezer from *Jedi*) in training with former Dark Jedi Mara Jade on a remote Rebel outpost on Altyr 5. Their sparring is soon interrupted, however, as insurgent Imperial forces descend on the base in an attempt to 'kick their back doors in'.

The player initially assumes the role of Kyle, hacking, slashing and blasting his way through dozens of Stormtroopers, flanked by an army of non-player Rebel soldiers. The action, even at this early stage, is hugely impressive, because not only have LucasArts improved their 3D engine immensely (coloured lighting, more varied textures, higher frame rate), but they've also thrown in a load of other new gameplay elements to heighten the ▶

Mara Jade strikes back

An apparent new arrival on the scene, Mara Jade has actually been part of the *Star Wars* universe ever since Timothy Zahn first put pen to paper in his first trilogy of books. Once known as The Emperor's Hand, Mara Jade began her *Jedi* career as a 'hit man' *(Hit woman? – Ed)* for Emperor Palpatine (the geezer with the bad complexion in *Return Of The Jedi*), until Luke Skywalker came along to spoil the party. As we all know, Skywalker trashed the Dark Emperor, putting Mara Jade out of a job and leaving the Empire in disarray. Mara then spent a great deal of her time plotting revenge on young Luke, before realising that the Emperor had in fact been a bit naughty and deserved everything he got. Thus she turned to the Light Side for redemption.

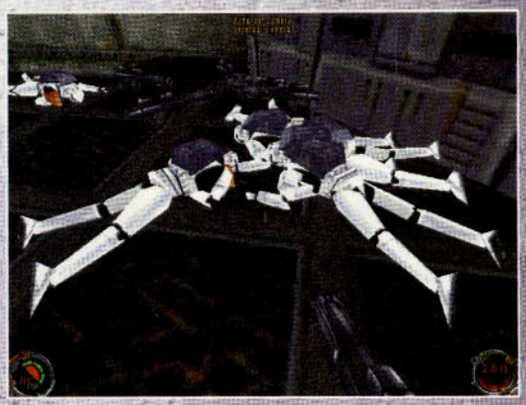


Living colour

Annoyingly referred to as 'colored' every time it is mentioned (don't these Yanks know how to spell?), the new spectral coloured lighting system works wonders for the atmosphere of the game. Out go the lacklustre grey rooms of *Jedi Knight* (good as they were), and in come the beautifully lit antechambers of *Mysteries Of The Sith*. Compare these two shots and you'll no doubt agree that it's been well worth the wait.





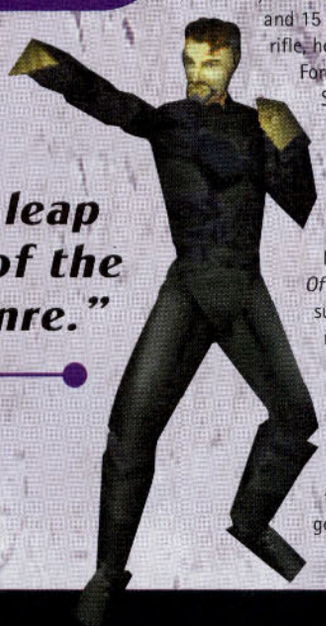


That'll teach them to mess with The Master... Now where's that 'hatch' on the back of their trousers?

atmosphere as well. As the Rebel and Imperial forces slug it out among themselves, radio chatter breaks out in your ear; Imperial forces blow a wall and then come spilling out to attack; TIE bombers fly in and raze the surrounding area; Scout Walkers hide around almost ever corner, as do rocket-launching bad guys and a whole host of bastard traps. *And that's just the first level...*

"Sith *is a commendable leap forward in the evolution of the first-person shoot 'em up genre.*"

To tell you the truth, *Mysteries Of The Sith* starts off brilliantly and gets better and better and better the further you get into it. The progressive nature of the constantly evolving storyline sees to that.

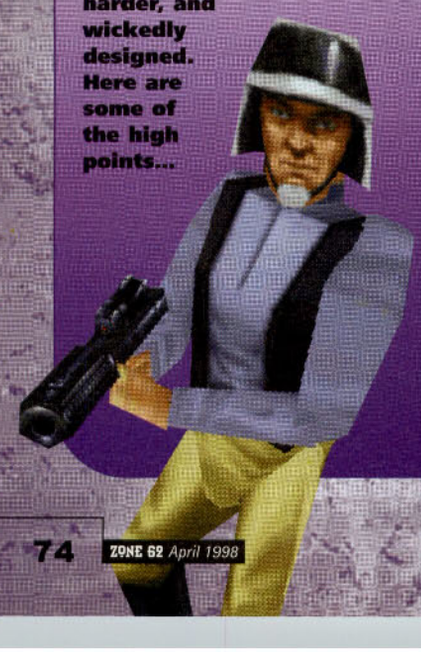


What's so good about it then?

Mysteries Of The Sith has 14 new single-player missions and 15 new multi-player ones, new weapons (sniper rifle, homing missiles and Imperial pistol) and new Force powers (Projection, Push, Saber Throw, Far Sight, Blinding and Chain Lightning). This in itself is not bad for 20 quid. But what makes this package much more than just a collection of new levels and bug fixes are the many brilliant gameplay touches that are encountered along the way. Mara Jade's fifth-level entrance is spectacular enough (*Return Of The Jedi* fans will love it), but the working surveillance cameras (plug yourself in at the nearest console), the 'races against time', the hideous traps (hidden drainage wells – nasty), the co-operative R2 units, the consequential banter, the huge number of recognisable *Star Wars* vehicles and the broody coloured lighting are the hundreds and thousands on the icing on the cake. Special mention must also go to John Williams' classic music which, in this particular game, is a whole new cake in itself.

New levels, new danger

When it comes to level design, no one does it better than LucasArts. *Jedi Knight* has some truly brilliant examples of the craft, but *Mysteries Of The Sith* is more sinister, harder, and wickedly designed. Here are some of the high points...



NEW REPUBLIC BASE ON ALTYR 5

A pitched battle between invading Imperials and your Rebel allies kicks off the first level in true immersive fashion. As TIE bombers pepper the base with explosives, Imperial Scout Walkers patrol the corridors, picking off your mates while taking pot shots at you. As Kyle Katarn, the player sets out to infiltrate an Imperial vessel and clear a way through a dense asteroid field for a Rebel escape.



KA'PA THE HUTT'S PALACE

"Ka'Pa no want to see you," says the guard at the entrance to this warren of a level.

This is Mara Jade's first solo mission, and Ka'Pa The Hutt's palace is riddled with various kinds of traps, as well as sneaky, slimy Tusken Warriors. In one excellent sequence, Mara even disguises herself as an enemy soldier in order to gain entrance to the palace's inner sanctum.



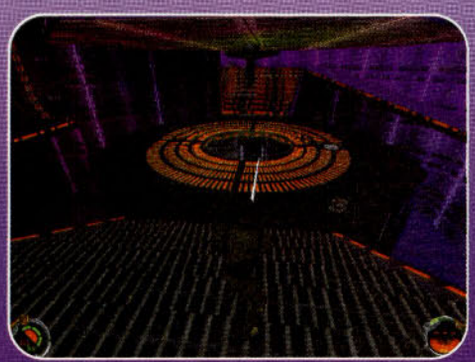
KATRAASII SPACE PORT, PART B

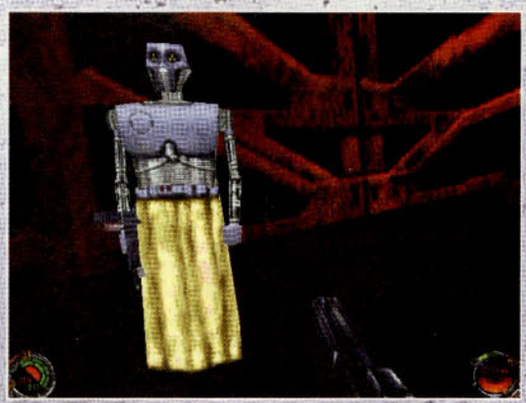
Katraasii, like Mos Eisley, is a sprawling space port filled with all manner of unsavoury characters you'd really rather not bump into down some dark back alley, and most of them are armed to the back teeth with concussion rifles and high explosives. The grand architecture and abundance of civilians help create a real 'lived-in' city atmosphere. Even the Millennium Falcon gets a look up.

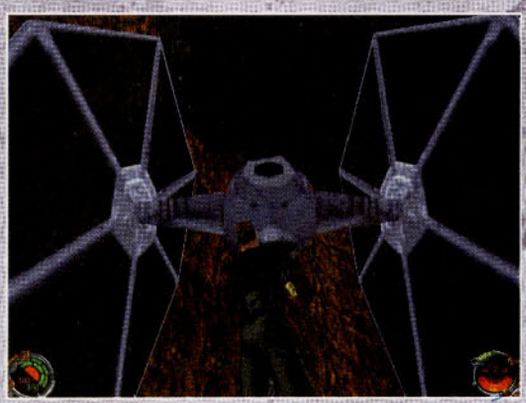


Secret level

Hidden deep within the recesses of the *Mysteries Of The Sith* CD is a hidden level that recreates the Luke Skywalker/Bespin scene from *The Empire Strikes Back*. Extracting this secret level is not easy, and – because the game has only just been released – we're not going to tell you how to get at it just yet... You'll have to wait for our next issue for that. Bah!







(Top) Ha, ha, ha – a robot in a dress! Funneeeee. (Above) That TIE pilot needs to blow his nose.

So is there a downside?

Not really. *Mysteries Of The Sith* has obviously been designed for those who have already completed the first game, thus it starts off pretty hard and then gets even harder. But it's a different kind of 'hard' to *Jedi Knight*. Whereas the former instalment forced the player into rock-hard Lightsaber battles every few levels, *Sith* keeps the story flowing for almost three quarters of the entire game – *then* it throws a mutha of a Jedi at you...

But *Mysteries Of The Sith* is the first 'real' follow-up to iD's now classic *Quake II*, and is also a commendable leap forward in the evolution of the first-person shoot 'em up genre. Not bad for an 'add-on pack', which in many ways is to add-on packs what *The Empire Strikes Back* is to *Star Wars* – a proper sequel. Not to mention the fact that in this game it's the turn of the Rebel Alliance to get their arses kicked...

Mysteries Of The Sith is more than just an 'add-on' to *Jedi Knight* – it is a completely new addition to a gaming series that we at *PC Zone* hope will run and run. So if you haven't played *Jedi Knight* yet, get it. Then get this. Otherwise you'll almost certainly be missing out.

REPUBLIC ESCORT SHIP

A routine assignment for Mara Jade turns into what we reckon is the best single-player, first-person shoot 'em up level of all time. The exit of a freshly rescued squadron of X-Wings is merely the tip of this iceberg-like level. Gravity gives in as a swarm of pirates swoop on the ship's cargo. A trip through the escort ship's lower engine level later and the Rebels are allowed to escape. For Mara Jade, though, the level continues...



TAKARA'S STRONGHOLD

To please Ka'Pa The Hutt, Mara is sent to track down a rare Jedi artefact from an evil bandit called Takara. Upon arrival Mara is captured and slung behind bars. Here the Jedi Force Pull action comes in extremely handy, especially as Mara spends most of the level practically unarmed. *Star Wars* fiends should look out for the rather spectacular Rancor monster which lurks midway through this level.



KAEROBANI'S BASE

Starting at the entrance of an elegant castle, Mara Jade soon finds herself trapped inside the twisted world of a vicious man. Frenzied 'guard dogs' protect the entrance to Kaerobani's hideout. Once inside, a maze of passages and corners lead to... a seemingly empty room. Here the whole level turns on its head as Mara is sucked into an immensely deep (and very scary) water pool filled with lethal sharp-toothed fish...



In Perspective

Quake II has a better engine, but no way does it have better scripted single-player level design than either *Jedi Knight* or *Mysteries Of The Sith*. We reckon you should get hold of this if you're looking for a great story and an immersive environment to lose, as well as challenge, yourself in.

Mysteries Of The Sith

Jedi Knight: Dark Forces II

Quake II

Dark Forces

Tech Specs

Memory: 16Mb min (32Mb rec'd)

Processor: P90 or faster

Graphics: 320x200 software to 800x600 accelerated 3D

Sound: All major sound cards

Controls: Keyboard, mouse, joystick



Score

Yes, my master.



Price: £19.99

Release date: Out now

Publisher: LucasArts/Virgin

Telephone: 0171 368 2255

Website: www.lucasarts.com

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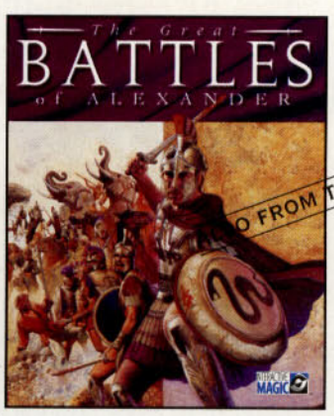
HE WAGED WAR, CHANGED THE FACE OF EUROPE AND GOT A PAT ON THE BACK WHEN HE GOT HOME.

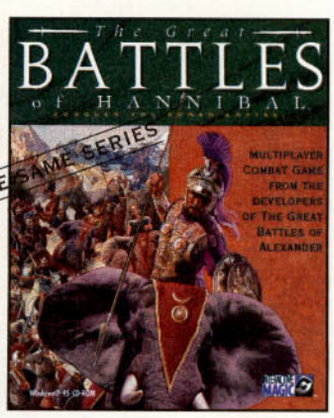
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Shadow Master

Psygnosis aren't unknown for coupling gorgeous graphics with a great gameplay engine. But can the Liverpool publishers' latest release keep the ball rolling? Paul Rose shines a torch into the darkness.



IT'S A DREAM WE ALL HAVE: ONE DAY WE'LL load up a game and be confronted with an intro sequence that's so utterly original and gobsmackingly fresh that everything that's gone before it pales into insignificance. Just imagine: the game begins, and instead of some all-too familiar spacecraft crawling across your monitor pursued by tiny fighter craft, there's something entirely different altogether. Imagine that there's no James Earl Jones-esque voice-over. Imagine that there's something else in place of yet another expensive-looking-but-probably-done-in-somebody's-sleep CGI sequence. Imagine all of this and you've imagined... the opposite of *Shadow Master*'s intro.



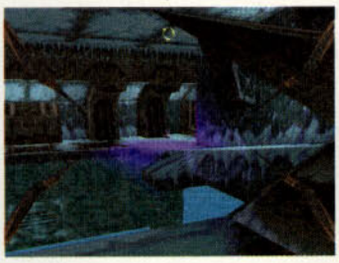
> ***"3Dfx-equipped types will have their eyeballs inverted by the special effects."***

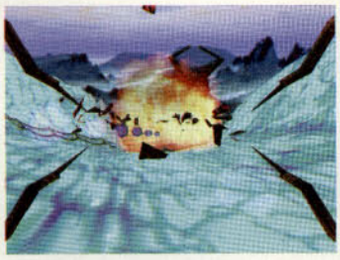
What's it all about, Alf-ie?

Just for a change, a marauding force of alien life forms is cutting a deadly swathe of destruction through the galaxy – and they're heading right for us. 'Us', in this instance, being a relatively peaceful colony world full of people who wouldn't hurt a fly (unless of course that fly happened to be in control of an armada of starships stuffed to the airlocks with plasma cannons and various other assorted weapons of galactic mass destruction).

With a set-up like that, there are only so many ways the gameplay in *Shadow Master* could go. It could, for instance, be a *Wing Commander*-type space shoot 'em up; it could be some sort of strategy game along the ▶







***Shadow Master* might look pretty (but what doesn't nowadays?) and the levels may well be huge, but unfortunately there's little that is either original or compelling.**

Rock 'n' scroll

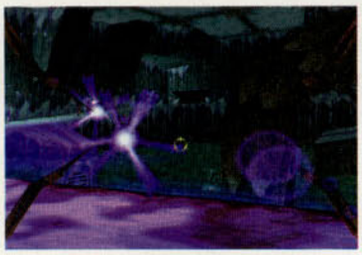
Apparently, the futuristic landscapes in *Shadow Master* were inspired by noted British fantasy illustrator Rodney Matthews.

Though Rodney Matthews is responsible for absolutely countless science-fiction and fantasy book covers – frequently featuring semi-naked individuals and woolly mammoths – Matthews is probably best known for his work on various classic rock album covers of the 1970s.

Along with other artists such as Roger Dean and those at Hipgnosis, Rodney Matthews helped establish the prog rock look which defined the decade *(As well as Psygnosis' early corporate look – Ed)*. Thin Lizzy, Yes, Rick Wakeman, Asia, Nazareth and The Scorpions are just some of the 'big name' acts to have collaborated with the painter. (There's little substance, though, in the rumour currently circulating that Rodney Matthews will be designing the cover artwork for Rick Astley's comeback project, a four-sided progressive concept album on the life cycle of the Panamanian hollow tree toad, entitled *Sonnet For A Windswept Soul*.)







The in-game monsters give a massive yawn to indicate that they're just as bored with *Shadow Master* as you are.

lines of *Pax Imperia*; it could even be another *Quake II*. *Shadow Master* is closer to *Quake* than *Pax Imperia*, but it's no *Quake* clone. You play the game from within a versatile cross between a tank and a beach buggy, which is dropped onto various planets where your task is to shut down the enemy's operations on that world and liberate the cybernetically enslaved populace, or complete a similar objective within a time limit.

The development team are obviously trying to recreate the feel of an old-style arcade shoot 'em up, albeit within a 3D, first-person perspective environment. Indeed, the swathes of enemies, the power-ups and the appearance of mid- and end-of-level bosses certainly evoke many of the conventions of the 1980s arcade experience. However, the labyrinthine structure of the 16 vast levels, and a number of simple puzzles (though there's nothing more involving than activating the odd switch), do offer something more.

More than this

As with most Psygnosis games, *Shadow Master* is a glorious, up-your-shirt and in-your-face graphics fest. Though it's obviously a little chunky on your average unaccelerated machine, 3Dfx-equipped types will have their eyeballs inverted by the special effects and multiple light-sourced explosions. The backdrops and overall design of the levels are quite unlike anything we've seen before, adopting a low-tech tribalism which gobs in the face of your usual clanky *Aliens*-influenced blue-collar military look.

Likewise, the enemies in *Shadow Master* are quite unlike anything we're used to finding in games such as these. They range from organic, subtly Manga-style cyborgs, to giant scuttling spiders and insects, to ridiculously big robot dragons and death-spitting tanks. As you'd expect, if it's capable of blowing you up, you can return the favour. The gratuitous pyrotechnics and whiz-bang visuals are *Shadow Master*'s strongest selling points.

Big smells

There are some unpleasant smells in *Shadow Master*'s trousers, though. For starters, the levels, while commendably big, are possibly too big. Just when you think you've twatted the end-of-level boss, you then find that you've got to backtrack through the silent battlefield in order to find another path to continue the level. The control of your tank/buggy thing could also be more responsive – at times it feels like it's sticking to the level walls, velcro-style, hindering any attempt to flee a savage onslaught. This wouldn't be so bad if the challenge set by the game wasn't so high; it will test the patience of even the most gifted games player, with enemies seeming to materialise out of thin air and box you in before you've a chance to flee. On top of it all there's a sneaking feeling that the difficulty has been pumped up to disguise the fact that, ultimately, there's little here that you've haven't seen elsewhere.

But gripes aside, *Shadow Master*'s obligatory multi-player modes should keep you going for some time. You shouldn't expect *Quake*-style deathmatch thrills, though. Likewise, the always surprising and unique visuals provide an incentive to keep plugging away, even though you'll need the patience of Saint Umpapa (the patron saint of not giving up on really challenging games) to get through it all.



Retro a-go-go

The team behind *Shadow Master* reckon they've successfully captured the flavour of classic 1980s arcade shoot 'em ups. What, pray tell, are they prattling on about? We select four games from the era to hold up as shining examples of loveliness.

ZAXXON
Hailed as the first 'proper 3D game', in reality *Zaxxon* was no more revolutionary than any other shoot 'em up of the era. However, it boasted high novelty value due to its (then) unique isometric viewpoint. This alone seemed enough to draw the swots away from their Rubik's Cubes.

SCRAMBLE
It may look like any other horizontally scrolling shoot 'em up, but *Scramble* was big and clever. Why? You could crash into the constantly undulating ground.

DEFENDER
If Big Daddy had been a horizontally scrolling shoot 'em up, he would have been *Defender*. With its fast-paced action and unrelenting enemy hordes, there isn't a human being alive who could claim to have finished the game without cheating.

R-TYPE
This gorgeous shooter, even these days, still stands up as a beacon of what a well-designed, well-balanced game should be. No wonder Psygnosis used it as inspiration for *Shadow Master*.

In Perspective

***Shadow Master* is a gratuitously visual experience, with enough thrills to make it worth a dabble for some patient gamers, although the side's let down by a steep learning curve and overly large levels. Neither is it the most original game of all time. But, hey, at least it's not just another cheap *Quake* clone.**

Shadow Master

Quake II

Wing Commander: Prophecy

X-Wing Vs TIE Fighter

Independence Day

Tech Specs

Memory: 16Mb

Processor: P133 or faster (P166 recommended)

Graphics: 320x200 software to 800x600 accelerated 3D

Sound: All major sound cards

Controls: Keyboard, mouse, joystick

Note: Also supports modem and eight-player network play

Score

Pretty, but vacant.

70

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Publisher: Psygnosis

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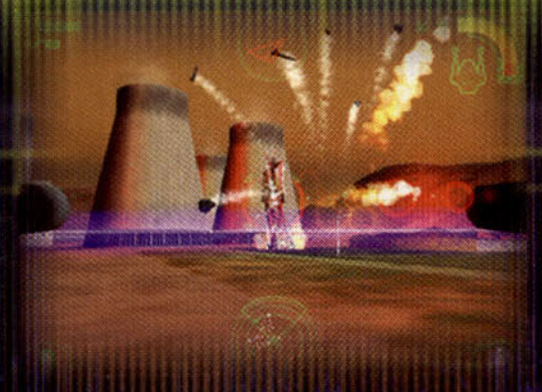
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"Astonishingly beautiful"
PC GAMER

"Incoming's technology enables the game to achieve a graphical look and frame rate similar to that seen on the very latest arcade machines"
PC FORMAT

"The greatest looking and technically smart 3D game so far, as of now it's a technical front-runner"
PC GAMING WORLD UK

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Full Force Feedback support

3D spatialised sound

2 player split screen

Modem to Modem and Serial link

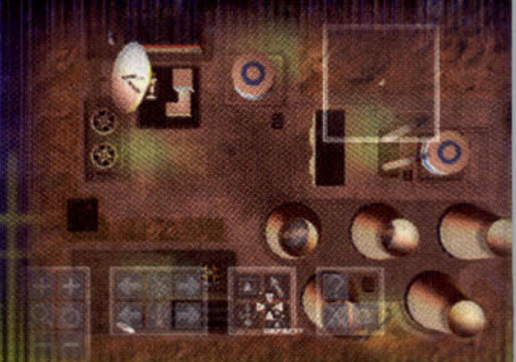
8 player LAN Network play

Atmospheric soundtrack

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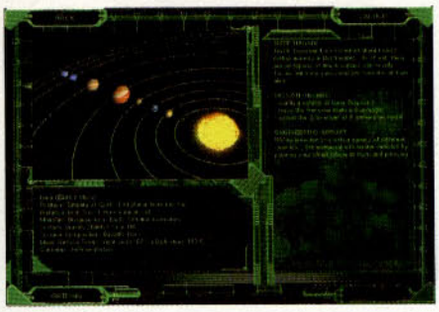
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Battlezone

PC ZONE Recommended

The last time Jamie Cunningham thought about tanks was first thing this morning. But the less said about that the better.





WAY BACK IN 1980, ATARI INTRODUCED A revolutionary new arcade cabinet called *Battlezone*. It was the world's first 3D video game – an inaugural wire-frame stroll into the realm of virtual reality. For two bob *(That's 10p in real money – Finance Ed)*, players could stick their head in a gunner's sighting box, drive a tank around a sleek vector landscape and destroy enemy units by firing sugar cubes at them. Seventeen years on, Activision acquired the rights to develop a title based around the cult coin-op. Be warned, though: it's not a sequel.



The plot

Back in 1952, a meteor shower hit the Bering Strait. Overshadowed by conflict in the Korean peninsular, the debris was secretly collected and analysed by American eggheads. After they'd finished waving flags, slapping each other on the back and making *National Geographic* documentaries about how wonderful they all were, it emerged that the debris contained a bio-metal of sentient manufacture. Importantly, the substance could be used in the development, production and deployment of weapons to provide a distinct US advantage in the Cold War.

In the summer of 1958, President Eisenhower creates NASA as the cuddly front end to the National Space Defence Force, an élite bunch of double-hard bastards tasked with searching the solar system for more bio-metal. However, the CIA learns that the Soviets have also collected and analysed the meteor debris, and that the Cosmo Colonist Army are planning a scavenging project of their own. So while everyone back on Earth watches the space race played out in monochrome on wooden-framed TV sets, the 'real' race involves lots of technicolour explosions, rocket-powered Skodas and desperate battles with laser-toting cosmonauts. On Mars. In 1959. Ahem.

So it's a B-movie for Win 95. Er...

The plot may be twaddle and the legendary *Battlezone* name a mere publicity stunt, but don't let that put you off. Activision have managed to mate strategy with arcade and deliver the mutant son of *C&C: Red Alert* and *I-War*. Which can't be bad.

***"Strategy mates with arcade to deliver the mutant son of* C&C: Red Alert *and* I-War."**

At the outset you find yourself on the US moon base, strutting about in a spacesuit with your weapon bobbing up and down in the bottom third of the screen (très *Quake*). Leap into a vehicle, scoot off over the lunar scenery and you'll soon discover that your transport not only handles like a flymo but also sounds like one – and, unfortunately, this will be your





(Below) The US base on the moon is a bit dark and sinister. Sort of like Oprah Winfrey but smaller. (Left) Eat cruise missile, communist scumbag! (Top left) The game is packed with fun 3Dfx toys such as glints, mists and swirly things.



(In circle) Soviet forces on the apocalyptic Martian landscape, poised to pick on tourists admiring the scenery.

home for the entire game. So settle down, crank up *Good Golly Miss Molly* on the eight-track (this is supposed to be the '50s, remember?) and get used to it.

The Red Alert bit

While the objective is read out to you, take a gander at the radar in the lower left-hand corner of the screen and work out where you are in relation to everything else. Select the recycler and command it to build defensive turrets and scavengers. Deploy the turrets strategically around the base, and check that your scavengers have floated off in search of minerals for recycling into new units.

The actual command process is smooth if a little slow: work through menus in your HUD, or point at the unit in question and pick from a list of orders. A single screen forms the interface between you and the rest of the game, and immediately there are two obvious criticisms. First, dashing through menus and sub-menus while trying to remember what unit is where, dealing with an attack wave of bad guys and simultaneously calling for back-up is extremely difficult. Second, once orders have been sent, it's not easy to see whether they've been obeyed – there's no bird's-eye view of the whole map, which rather limits your grasp on the situation. On more than one occasion I deployed a turret next to a building, only to come back later and find a pile of rubble and the turret going round in demented circles on the other side of the camp.

The I-War bit

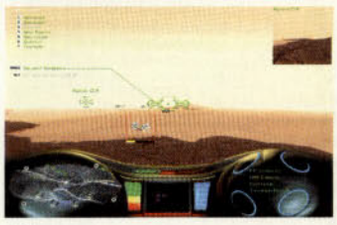
The landscape is always a pleasure to fly over, but unless you've got a 3Dfx card and a P200, beware of sluggish responses. The graphics and fogged horizon are in nouveau *Magic Carpet* style and, just like the Bullfrog masterpiece, the atmosphere is spot on. The missions are diverse and often change tack halfway through, moving your team from moon to moon and helping to keep you involved in the game. Trouble is, there's no real suspense. Take combat as an example: if ground control doesn't warn you of an approaching enemy, the radar will – and after you've waited for them to come into visual range, you shoot them down. Nothing looks particularly menacing, so there's none of the adrenalin or foreboding you get in other first-person shooters. Move the mouse to aim, right-click to cycle through weaponry, then left-click to fire. At times it can all feel a little, well, monotonous.

And it sounded so nice

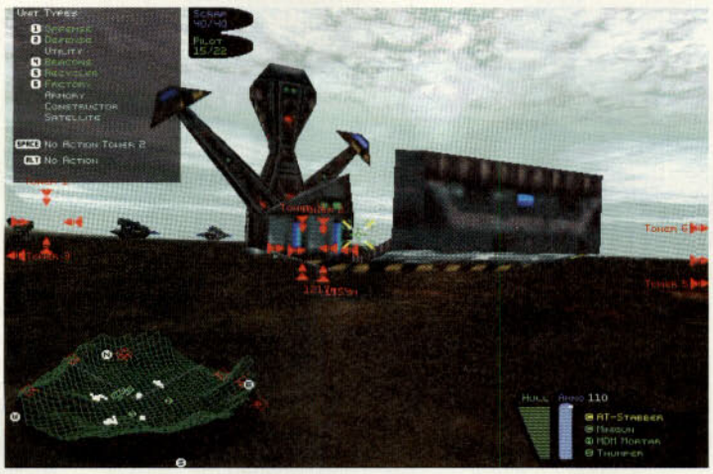
That's not to say it won't keep you interested. While I often thought: "Here we go again," when the umpteenth pair of Soviet flankers arrived and started attacking my command tower, there's a certain *je ne sais quoi* that keeps you coming back for more. Maybe it's the feeling that you're missing something; maybe it's the hope that the interface will 'click' and you'll be able to breeze your way through in a jiffy. It's hard to say.

Gripes aside, Activision have gone to town on the multi-player side of things. Up to four players can participate in an Internet game on the ActivLink server; eight players can thrash things out over a LAN; and head-to-head modem play is also an option. Networking is refined and includes proper alliances (with teams able to share both resources and intelligence), as well as an editor which we are promised will enable you to design your own single-player, multi-player and deathmatch scenarios.

In summary, I can only say that Activision's latest is a worthy successor, if not the true sequel most people will be expecting. However, while it offers a clever amalgamation of two different kinds of game, it lacks instant appeal and can at times be a tad tricky – two things the original never suffered from.







(Above left) The detail level of the terrains isn't really up to much, but there's so much going on you don't seem to notice. (Above right) Along with the recycler, the factory unit builds the various units that take part in the game.

In Perspective

A fresh blend of action and strategy with impressive visuals, and a veritable banquet for multi-player fans. That said, it's a fraction too frantic, and lacks a bit in the excitement department. If you're a fan of the brilliantly simple arcade classic, you'll be gasping for air by the time you reach the third mission.

'New' Battlezone

I-War

Wing Commander

C&C: Red Alert

Tech Specs

Memory: 16Mb
Processor: P166 recommended
Graphics: SVGA
Sound: All major sound cards
Controls: Mouse, joystick, keyboard

Score

Stimulating, if not that thrilling.

81

Price: £39.99
Release date: Out now
Publisher: Activision
Telephone: 01895 456700
Web site: www.activision.com

dan Personal Computers The People's Choice

The Golf Pro

PC ZONE Classic





The game that's set to revolutionise golf on the PC is finally here – and it only took about as long to make as *Titanic: The Big Wet Movie*. Patrick McCarthy finds out whether or not it was worth the wait.

HOW LONG DOES IT TAKE A BULL ELEPHANT to reach maturity? Well, it would seem about the same time that it's taken to make *The Golf Pro* – we did a cover feature on it a year and a half ago, remember? – so finding it finally dropping onto our desks was as shocking as discovering a male friend of Michael Jackson's with pubic hair. Its most famous feature, of course, is the revolutionary swing control system that those in the know call Moving-The-Mouse-About-From-Side-To-Side™. *(MouseDrive™, actually – Ed.)* So let's get that out of the way first.

Touchy feely

The control method is entirely mouse-based. You hold the button down and move the mouse one way for the back swing, then move it the other way to play the shot, releasing the button as you do so. You quickly get used to it, and it isn't long before you're playing anything from a slight fade on a dog-leg to an outrageous hook around a dozy pensioner wandering across the course looking for his teeth. The fact that you have to do everything by feel, rather than by just clicking a percentage of a power bar, means that you'll have to put in much more practice before you become proficient at *The Golf Pro* than you would with any other golf game. It also means it can potentially be frustrating – so quick-fix merchants beware. It all seems simple enough at long distances – driving and hitting long irons – but when you have to do those little chips from just off the green it can drive you right round the bend. And *putting*... Please, please don't talk to me about putting. I hit a three-iron to four feet and four-putted. Which is why...

"The in-game screens look good and the playing area is well-laid out. It's a labour of love."



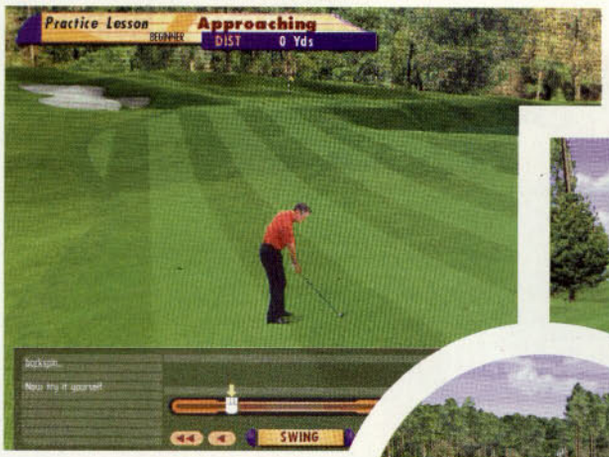
Handicaps

There are three difficulty levels (Beginner, Amateur and Professional) – which give the game longevity, because you can't start as a professional; you have to get a handicap and lower it by recording rounds – if you improve enough, you'll be able to play at Professional difficulty, and if you keep doing well you'll actually become a professional. Then you'll be able to hit the ball further, charge people to laugh at their swings, and get hideous sweaters to blind your opponents with on the cheap.





(Below left) I hit one closer than that from miles further away. Yes I did. Yes I did... Come on, then! (Right) Look at the texture of that grass in the foreground. It's eerie, that's what it is.



(Left) And once Gary Player has told you what to do, you get to follow his example (although the press-ups are optional).





Lady, you gotta practise

If you want to have the remotest chance of doing the touchy-feely things well, you'll have to go to the specially provided practice hole and hit balls. You can do everything you've ever wanted to – drive, chip, putt, whack the ball out of sand, and so on – and there are a number of well-put together tutorials with Gary Player talking you through all the things you need to practise and giving you lessons. It's cool.

In fact, the whole thing is well put-together, from the presentation screens and introductory lessons, to the two different ways to calibrate your mouse, and the way you're eased into the whole game right from the start by Player chatting to you about golf and this game. All the in-game screens look good and the playing area is simple and well laid-out – real 'less is more' stuff. It's a labour of love. (Which is probably why it took so long to finish.)

Your eyes... that moonlight... why you're... beautiful

The course graphics are outstanding – but they're pre-rendered, so you see shots from aerial views and 'video' inserts rather than from where the ball lands, as in *Links* and *PGA*. It also means you can be aiming the ball without the view being behind the player, which is fine for long shots (you can aim by using the hole's plan view) but somewhat unhelpful when you're playing short chips or long putts. You can click to view the green from a different angle, but it's not the same as being directly behind the putt.

But all other aspects of the game are very good indeed. There are options for serial link play – at a later date there'll be a patch to enable modem play (you can also record a round and e-mail it or send it on floppy for someone else to play against).

The two courses in the game, St Mellion in Cornwall (described by Jack Nicklaus as "the finest galleried course in the world" – but then he did design it), and Player's own Hilton Head National course in South Carolina are both challenging. The commentary is slick and varied, although the commentator sounds like an avuncular American doctor. When he says: "That's heading toward the rough..." he sounds mildly concerned. And when he adds a kindly but infinitely regretful, "Yes... it's gone in..." it's like he's just told you your first-born child's life support machine has had to be unplugged. (Then, when you hit a cracking chip and he says: "I-I-I like it..." you start to wonder whether he's up to something in the commentary booth.) Good stuff.



Miss a putt by miles, and everyone's supportive. There's even a self-help group with a special phone number.

Get that wrist moving, baby



You play shots in *The Golf Pro* by holding the mouse button down and moving the mouse from side to side. Either direction can count as the back swing, and either mouse button can be used. Move the mouse squarely and you hit the ball straight; angle the mouse to the left (if you're right-handed, that is) and you hit a draw; angle it to the right and you hit a fade. Loft and back swing is controlled by releasing the mouse button: before the impact line, you hit down on the ball more; afterwards, you drill the ball low. All this means that *The Golf Pro* is probably the only PC golf game that's going to generate as many artificial swing aids as the real thing. It can't be long before someone brings out a grooved contraption to run your mouse along; or there'll be special non-slip gloves with specially strengthened index fingers (and, of course, built-in wrist stabilisers to do away with the mouse-groove machine). We just can't wait.

In Perspective

A great golf game, with excellent attention to detail and fine ball dynamics. And a weird control system that's well worth taking the time to master. Those bored with *PGA* might like to give it a go, but anyone who dislikes the vagaries of *Links*' powerbar probably won't like it. It doesn't score the same as the other Big Two because of the aiming facility for putting. A minor flaw in an otherwise fab game.

The Golf Pro

PGA Tour 97

Links

David Leadbetter's Golf

Tech Specs

Memory: 16Mb

Processor: P90 (P133 recommended)

Graphics: SVGA

Sound: SoundBlaster and compatibles

Controls: Mouse

Score

An excellent game, but you'll have to practise.

90

Price: £39.99

Release date: Out now

Publisher: Empire Interactive

Telephone: 0181 343 7337

Website: www.empire.co.uk

dan Personal Computers The People's Choice

Air Warrior III

Paul Presley takes to the virtual skies without a hanky in search of bogies.



'LL CONFESS: I ALMOST DISMISSED THIS little oddity within my first five minutes of play. The graphics were crude by today's standards, the interface redefined the word 'clumsy', and it comes from a company that hasn't been having the greatest time lately. And had I gone with my initial gut feeling, I may very well have missed out on one of the most truly great gaming experiences I've ever had the pleasure to encounter.



(Above) The autopilot was a finicky creature that required wining and dining first. (Left) The various squad rooms let players meet, form plans and say "Hey m8" a lot.

What you need to know about playing AWIII

Primarily a WWII sim (although you can stray into the First World War and the Korean conflict if you desire), *AWIII* has been designed to cope with hundreds of players at once, all fighting three different countries. There is a phalanx of single-player missions included with the game that, although playable, never reach the heights of excellence other, dedicated single-player games do.

There's also a very clumsy interface to negotiate; or at least that's how it appears at first. After a few hours' play, you start to realise that what Interactive Magic have done is to go for something functional rather than attractive. It revolves around typing in commands at a *Quake*-style console, and I honestly can't see why they couldn't simply have gone with the traditional keystroke command system used by, ooh... everyone else.

However, when you do stray on-line, *AWIII* is beyond superb – up-close and personal dogfighting, with humans all around you, some allies, some enemies. There's no other game like it. The radio communication system is superb, and crewing multi-seat bombers, with different players manning the different gun positions and communicating vocally via microphones, is so intense an experience that words can't describe it. Everything about the multi-player game works so superbly well that it's a real shame I'm going to have to put a downer on things.

What you need to know *to play* AWIII

All of the above comes at a price though. Several prices, in fact. First there's your sleep pattern. At the time of writing, I can't speak for how well the UK LineOne server works as it isn't yet running. I've had to play on an American server, and consequently have had to wait till the midnight hours before it really starts to liven up. Hopefully LineOne will prove just as popular with UK and European gamers, but that's up to you.

Secondly, this is a subscription game service. I was fortunate enough to be connected to a beta test site which was free of charge (in exchange for the occasional bugs, patch upgrades and other pre-release tweaking). But had I been forced to pay a regular fee for the game, I may not have been quite so enthusiastic about things. Personally, I feel that Internet games should be free – when you've already paid upwards of 30 quid for the game, you shouldn't be expected to pay more each time you turn it on.

The single-player game isn't quite good enough to warrant a Classic rating, and the fee-based multi-player set-up rankles the anti-establishment anarchist inside me just enough to stop me from giving it a higher score than the one I have. Which is a shame, because *Air Warrior III* is one of the best multi-player games I've ever played. And that includes *Quake II*.





(Above left) Briefings are traditionally held by the man with the silliest moustache. (Above right) Like lambs to the slaughter.

In Perspective

Dedicated on-line flight sims are a rare breed. *F-22 Raptor* is the other notable in this genre, and is obviously a very different game – much more arcade-like and lightweight. World War II flight sims seem to be even thinner on the ground, the only ones springing to mind being old MicroProse efforts.

Air Warrior III

F-22 Raptor

1942 Pacific Air War

Tech Specs

Memory: 16Mb
Processor: Pentium
Graphics: SVGA
Sound: All major sound cards
Controls: Joystick, flightstick, mouse, keyboard

Score

Add about ten points or so and a Classic award if you play it on-line.



Price: £39.99 (comes with one month's free play on LineOne)
Release date: Out now
Publisher: Interactive Magic
Telephone: 01344 409399
Website: www.imagicgames.co.uk

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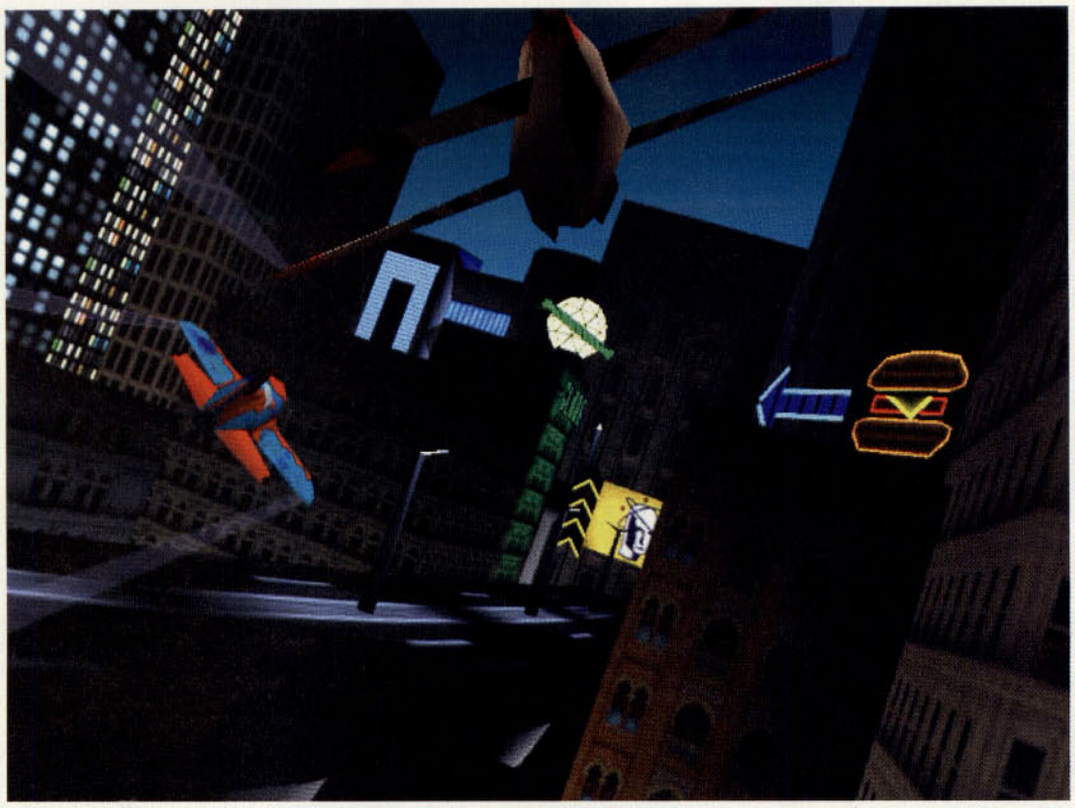
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Plane Crazy









(Above left) Pizza delivery boys are taking desperate steps to make the half-hour deadline... (Above) Endoscope action ahoy.

When it comes down to complicated, technically-minded flight sims, we give them to one of our resident experts; arcade stuff goes to the nearest moron: take it away Patrick McCarthy.

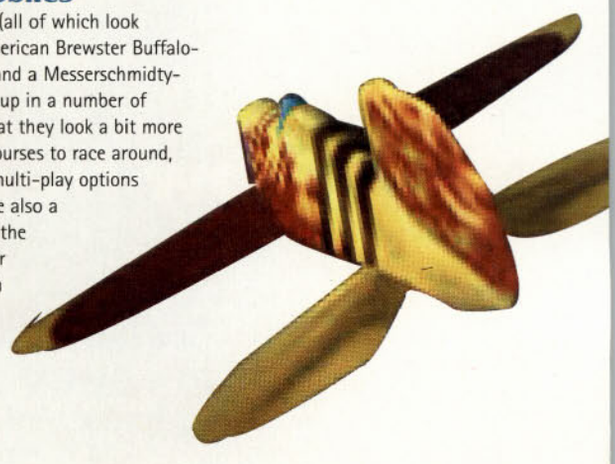
I DOUBT WHETHER ANY OF YOU EVER watched the recent TV series *Jeremy Clarkson's Penis Substitutes Around The World* (or whatever it was called), in which the nation's favourite lanky dickhead travelled around the world gasping and getting moist at the tip over anything with a big engine in it. I only saw one episode. I have a very good excuse – I was eating my dinner, and it was either that or three fly-on-the-wall documentaries: a holiday one, in which fat, burnt Essex birds wobbled about in tanga briefs, constantly drinking, vomiting and eating, like some giant pink versions of bluebottles (only less appealing); a vet one, in which trainee vets bit the testicles off sheep and spat them into a beer glass during castration season; and a hospital one in which doctors armed with an endoscope attempted to make it onto the front page of *Rectums Today*. None of them made particularly desirable viewing or created a pleasant eating environment, so I had little choice other than to watch the lanky dickhead. (As everyone knows, it's impossible to eat without the TV on.)

Anyway, in the particular episode I watched, some lunatic rich Americans put extremely powerful engines into World War II fighter planes and raced around a course in the desert marked out by telegraph poles. Everyone was very impressed, and Jeremy had a go and shrieked a bit. He may even have got slightly turgid. *(But probably not – Ed.)* *Plane Crazy* is a racing game based on this sort of behaviour (the racing, not the getting turgid; you'll have to go elsewhere for that).

"I thought* Plane Crazy *would be one of those frantic arcade racing games – like* Pod *for propeller heads."

Planes, trains and mobiles

You get three planes to choose from (all of which look distinctly WWII-ish): there's a fat American Brewster Buffalo-looking one, a Spitfirey-looking one and a Messerschmidty-looking one. But you can paint them up in a number of disgusting colour combinations so that they look a bit more sporty and lifestyley. There are five courses to race around, and there are network and Internet multi-play options if you have lots of e-chums. There are also a number of power-ups – which do all the usual stuff like slowing rivals down or speeding you up or whatever – which hang from poles dotted about the course like children's mobiles. Only they're rather more







(Left) The lower you fly, the faster you go. (Below) You can paint your planes in a number of hideous combinations

useful, obviously. You have to fly very low to pick them up – in fact, staying low is part of the point of the game, and you're constantly reminded by the commentator that the lower you fly, the faster you'll go.

Airheads

Anyway, given the subject matter, I thought it was going to be one of those frantic arcade racing games that moves so fast you have to wear plastic trousers with rubber bands around the ankles if you want to avoid soiling the low-level furniture – sort of like *Pod* for propeller heads. You'd like to think so. It looked like it might be quite a laugh. And to a certain extent it is. To start with, it looks great: each course has been lovingly crafted – there are trains running along tracks through the desert, monorails running through a night-time cityscape that looks like something out of *Blade Runner*, a shopping mall to fly through, and spectacular scenery all around. And flying is fun.

Racing spoilers

Unfortunately there are a couple of things that spoil it. Firstly, the planes don't really feel like planes – or, rather, they do in the fast, open bits, but when you bump into the background (which you will do) the plane behaves more like you're hanging from a wire than flying. Obviously you're not going to get simulation-style flight models for an arcade game, but some semblance of reality would be nice.

There's a very good reason why there isn't too realistic a flight model, and that's the fact that most of the courses are so tortuous and convoluted you'd think twice about potholing in them, never mind flying a plane down them. There are canyons with rock formations blocking your way; back streets in Docklands with Lloyds Building-style duct piping everywhere; narrow, twisting tunnels with tiny entrances and routes so tight it's like something from the endoscope programme mentioned earlier – at times, you have to go so slowly to negotiate a path that you're hardly racing at all. And some of the courses have so many alternative routes that you start wondering whether you'll ever find a way out. They make the later courses in *WipEout* look like a jaunt up the M1. All of this means it's very difficult – the manual even boasts about the degree of difficulty – even after you get used to the way the planes handle. And rather heavy going.

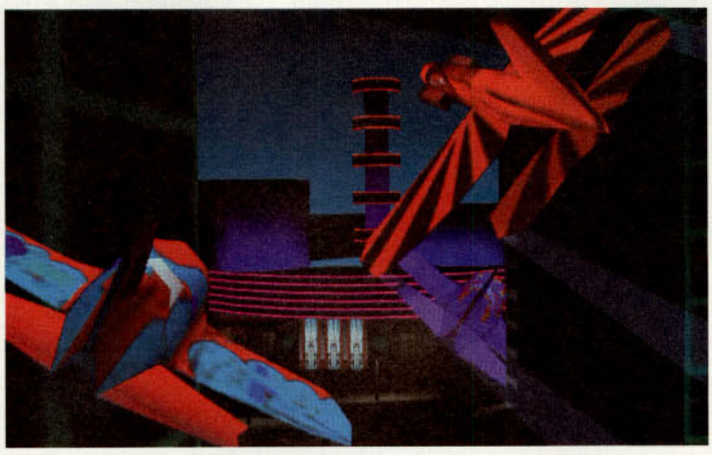
Shame

It's a shame because I really like some aspects of it, and there's a definite one-more-go factor. It's fun to race through streets and under monorails – in a way this is like a racing version of the ancient flying-and-filming game, *Stunt Island* – and if you're prepared for a long struggle you might get something out of it.

But the one thing any arcade racing game needs is an adrenalin rush, a sense of speed. The likes of *Screamer Rally*, *Pod* and *F197* all have this. It's why people play them. One of my favourite driving game experiences is still the Wauchope stage from the licensed version of *RAC Rally* – a 160mph downhill thrash that's hard to beat for a sense of on-the-edge speed. You hardly ever get a feeling of speed in *Plane Crazy*, since half the time you have to hold back just to dodge the next inconveniently placed obstacle. Even the fact that you can't save a Championship adds to the frustration – one loss and you have to start again. All in all, *Plane Crazy* is accomplished and it looks good, but it could have been a lot more fun.







(Top left) Trevor's cataracts meant everything looked blue above 200 feet. (Bottom left) Cross-winds hurl you sideways at inconvenient moments. (Above) The battle for parking places in the town centre continues apace.

In Perspective

It looks good and works in places, but you expect foot-to-the-floor speed and excitement from an arcade racer. The other games listed aren't really the same type (ie this one's got planes), but *Pod*'s the nearest in feel – and they all provide a bit more speed.

Plane Crazy

Formula 1 97

Screamer Rally

Pod

WipEout 2097

Tech Specs

Memory: 16Mb (32Mb rec'd)

Processor: P166 (P200 rec'd)

Graphics: SVGA (Direct3D-compatible card recommended)

Sound: All major sound cards

Controls: Keyboard, joystick

Score

Very hard, with no real sense of speed.

70

Price: £39.99

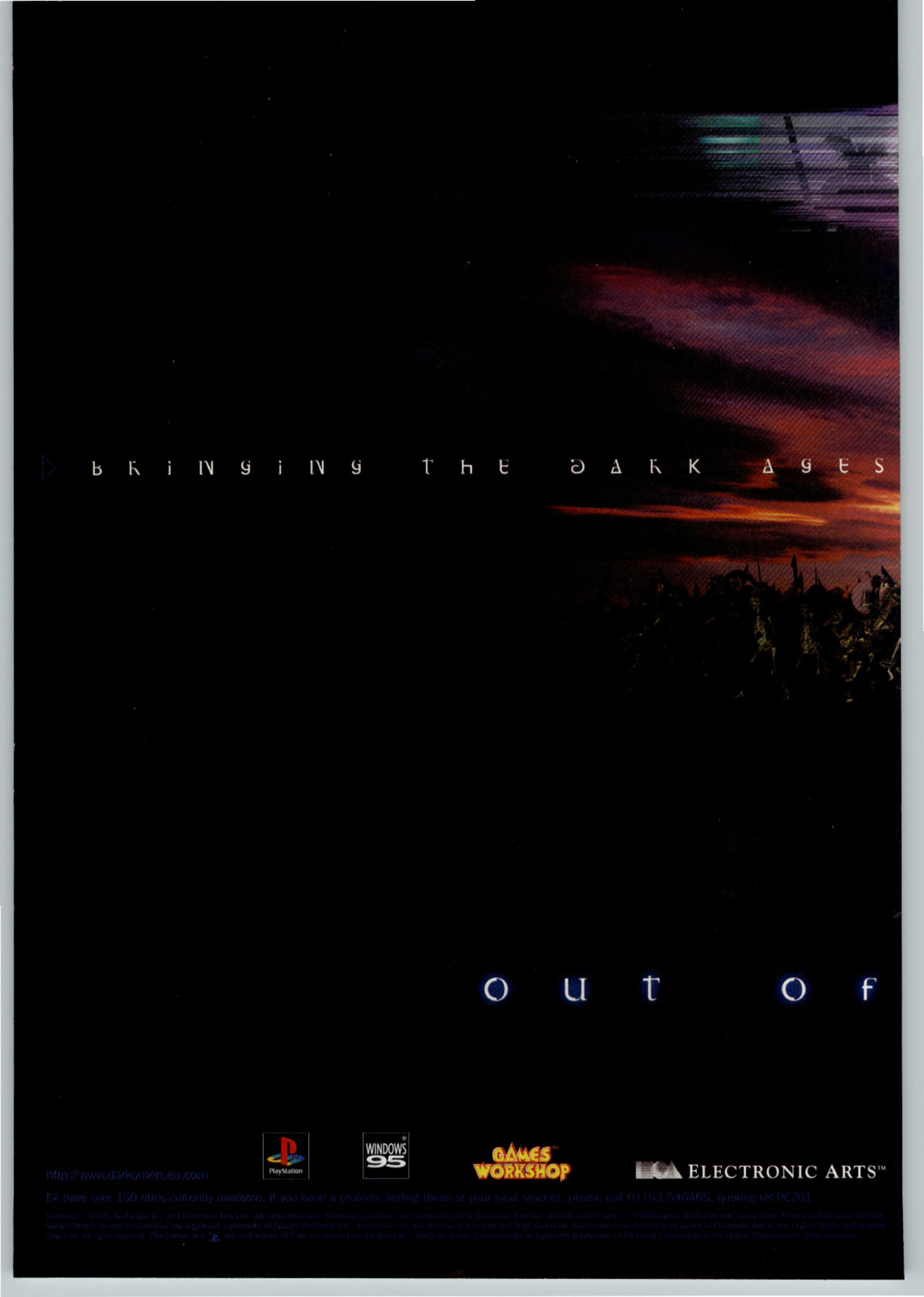
Release date: April

Publisher: Europress

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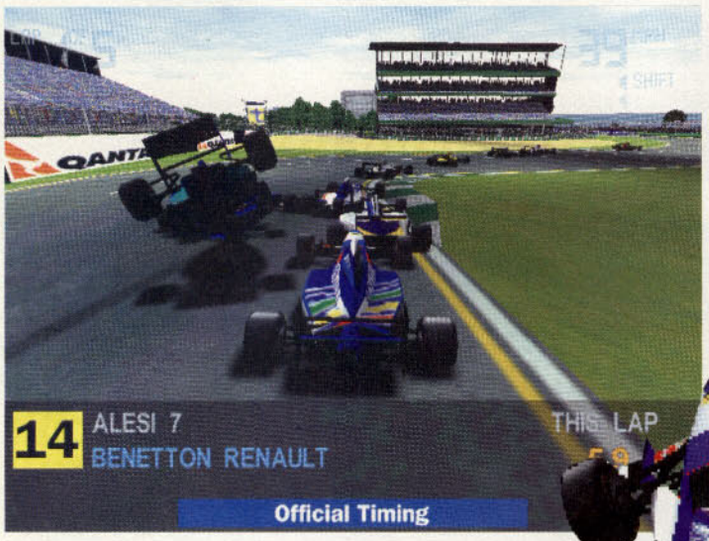
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F1 97

PC ZONE Classic





Some mags give games to people who know most about the subject at hand; we chose to give this one to the person with the appropriate clothes. And Patrick McCarthy has an anorak.

THIS IS THE NEW VERSION OF last year's best-selling arcade Formula 1 game. The informed among you will already be aware that the '97' tag means you get what's now last season's teams. (They got it out in time for the PSX, but PC owners aren't so lucky.) And basically, it's had a huge overhaul and been given a new hi-res mode.

Firstly, all last year's track, team and car changes have been added – there's Melbourne, the A1 Ring and Jerez; track safety modifications have been incorporated (Monaco's different around the harbour); and cars wear last season's advertising colours: MacLarens wear the Nazi-throwback Silver Arrows look, and Williams are in white and blue.

Graphic sex

The one drawback with the sexy new hi-res graphics (which was also true of the previous version) is that you either need a 3D accelerator card to run it, or a 4Mb graphics card. If you don't have either yet it's quite an extra outlay. Obviously the upgrade would serve you well in the future and won't just be for *F1 97*. But if you're really desperate to play the game and can't be arsed to upgrade, buy a set of firemen's cutters and hack the wings and roof from your car, then drive everywhere really fast, standing up.



As before, there are numerous different views on offer, including a new cockpit view (above right).

Different modes for different... er, spodes

The two racing modes, Grand Prix and Arcade, are now radically different. In Arcade mode you can cut corners outrageously, tail-slide like a hovercraft, and get rewarded with additional tracks and other goodies. Grand Prix mode now has five levels of difficulty and more simulation elements, with more complex car set-ups – although it's still basically an arcade game. (You can also have random mechanical failures, which you'll switch off forever the first time you come into the stadium at Hockenheim, leading on the last lap, and your car dies.)

As well as the Murray Walker random commentary effect, you now get pit crew messages in your earphones. The one I heard most was "Are you alright?" as Ralph Schumacher ploughed into my head from behind yet again. This is because all the drivers now have different personalities (so stay well clear of both Schumachers). Where the first version had computer opponents who you couldn't budge from the racing line even by a tactical nuclear strike, this one has them crashing and making mistakes. And yes, you can finally run them off the road – or 'do a Michael', as it's known. As well as the Murray stuff, Martin Brundle interjects with what sounds like excerpts from his book, *A Downbeat Technical Guide To Motor Racing*, and manages to sound marginally less interesting than Nigel Mansell delivering a lecture on the spread of lung disease in 19th century mining communities.

"In this version you can run your computer opponents off the road – or 'do a Michael', as it's known."

Graphically speaking, the extra resolution means 'hello nice effects' when you hit some grass or take a shortcut through the sand, but bye-bye replays, and no chance of a rear-view mirror. And they've finally included a cockpit view, in Grand Prix mode. It's good – you can even have a tear-off







(Top left) If you manage to win the championship in any mode, you get to do it all again in cars from the '60s (well that's what they're telling us). (Bottom left) In the pits you can watch other cars whizz past in the background while your mechanics cock things up and burst into flames. (Above right) In Arcade mode, anything goes – even playing wheelbarrows.

visor effect. And it's better-detailed than the PSX version, in which the arms-and-wheel arrangement looked like someone had nailed two scarves to a Cumberland sausage.

Moans

Once again, Psygnosis have proved that few minds are as illogical as those of programmers, by having a menu system that's even more convoluted than last year's. And considering you now have to change downforce set-ups, tyres and just about everything else according to each course and the weather conditions, it's stupid that (a) you can't do so within the same practice or qualifying session (you have to exit and move on to the next session), and (b) no one tells you what the weather's like before you start a session (you can start a race on slicks and find it's pissing with rain – perhaps you should get windows fitted in the garage). Plus there's the occasional background pop-up at busier courses on less than ninja machines.

But these are minor faults in an otherwise good game. It's cornered the market in providing F1 racing for those who can't be arsed to learn the ins and outs of a full-on simulation like Ubi Soft's mind-blowingly difficult offering, *F1 Racing Simulation*, while still letting you make it difficult enough to pretend you're a natural racing driver with cat-like reflexes. Plus, this year, you get a LAN multi-player option. At the time of writing it was four-player, but they were aiming to make it eight, and may even release a patch for 22-player, which would be amazing if they managed it (but don't come running to us if that doesn't happen). Oh, and if you win the Championship in GP mode, you get to race about in a bit of Jim Clark-style '60s action – only ideally without the death bit.

Murray Walker, verbal incompetent



In the history of human accomplishment, there can be few who have risen to the top of a profession based solely on the ability to verbally communicate, despite lacking the most basic elements of such a skill. Murray Walker is one such man. Despite the fact that he's a laughing stock, famous for cocking up everything and making simple situations seem supremely complex, ITV gave him a huge contract when they took over F1 purely because he was "the voice of Formula 1". It's bizarre, it really is.

Anyway, loads of his more famous verbal clangers get put into the game, and this year they've added even more of them (you probably noticed their TV advertising makes use of them). Here's the pick of the new ones:

- "With the race half-gone, there is still only half the race to go..."
- "Fan-tas-tic! The first five places are filled by five different cars! Terrific!"
- "He's obviously gone in for a wheel change. I say 'obviously' because I can't see it..."
- "And now do my eyes deceive me, or is that car sounding rough?"
- "This is a very interesting and exciting circuit because it has inclines – and not just up, but down as well..."
- "As he pulls into the pits, I'm going to stop my startwatch..."
- "And now they're going into the penultimate last lap but one..."

And so on and so on. At least our licence fee isn't paying the man any more.

In Perspective

Arcade racing games. There's millions of the buggers out there, and so many good ones, from futuristic stuff like *Pod* and *WipEout*, to rooted-in-the-present stuff like the fabulous *Screamer Rally*. *F1 97* is a worthy addition.

F1 97

Screamer Rally

Pod

WipEout 2097

Tech Specs

Memory: 16Mb

Processor: P133

Graphics: SVGA

Sound: All major sound cards

Controls: Keyboard, joystick, gamepad, wheel

Note: 4Mb graphics card or 3D accelerator support only

Score

One of the best arcade racers around.

92

Price: £39.99

Release date: Out now

Publisher: Psygnosis

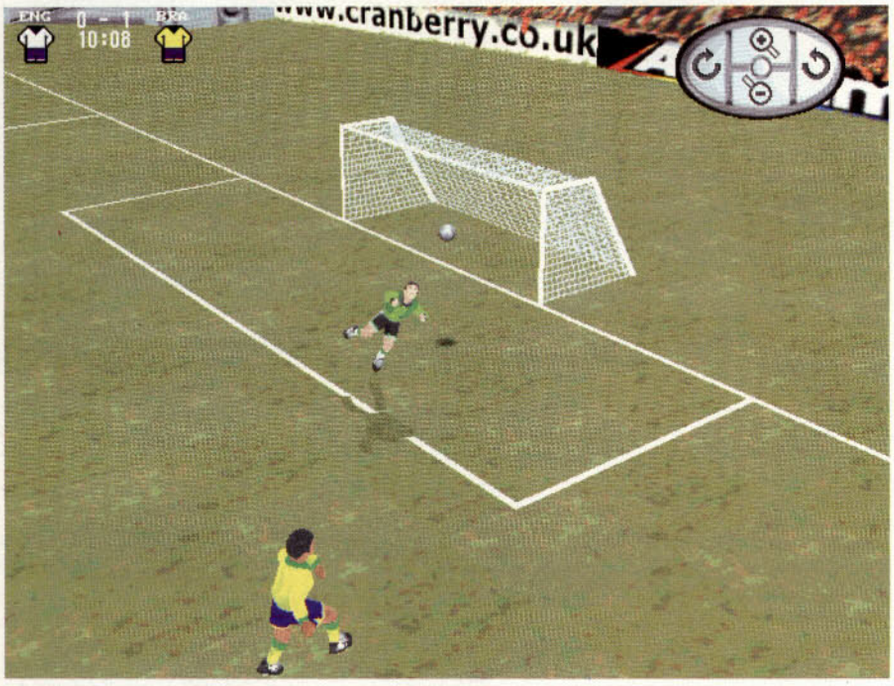
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SuperMatch Soccer

As a Chester City supporter, Steve Hill has seen some bad games of football. He has also seen some bad football games.



STEP BACK IN TIME... KAJAGOOGOO TOP THE chart, and Jon Ritman's *Match Day* rocks the Spectrum, spawning an equally successful sequel. Ten years on and Ritman's Cranberry Source attempt to repeat history by reuniting with Ocean for a belated third instalment, entitled, naturally enough, *Match Day 3*. Following a mixed response from the UK press, Ocean renege and Acclaim step in to pick up the pieces. Then, in a sick twist, *Match Of The Day* step in and complain that the name of the game is too similar to that of their TV program. Hence the hastily modified *SuperMatch Soccer*; although *Blankety Blank*'s lawyers are understood to be looking in to the matter.

Of course, we first saw *Match Day 3* many months ago, and it looked far from posh then. Now, in the wake of *Actua Soccer 2* and *FIFA: Road To World Cup 98*, it looks positively scruffy, like a filthy gypsy in a rich man's world. Visually it's definitely the poor relation of the current batch of football titles, the sparse graphics betraying the game's origins and cocking a snook at recent technological advances. The players in *SuperMatch Soccer* are made up of Cranberry Source's so-called polar sprouts, of which much has been made. To this day, nobody in their right mind knows or cares what a polar sprout is, and we never ever want to hear them mentioned again.

In reality, the players are actually more cabbages than sprouts, proving to be fat, lazy bastards. The sprint button gives them a brief surge of pace, after which they are left retching and wheezing before being able to regain any kind of speed – much like Teddy Sheringham, in fact. Furthermore, rather than the slick motion-capture that we have become accustomed to, they adhere to some kind of improvised Lambeth Walk, running as if they've fouled themselves. At least you can see where they are though, the pulled back view of the pitch offering a variety of players to pass to.

"In reality, the players are actually more like cabbages than sprouts, proving to be fat, lazy bastards."

Beyond the ultraworld

Except there's no pass button. Or shoot button, for that matter. Instead the leather orb is transported via three kick buttons, each delivering a different height of punt, with the amount of purchase dependent on the duration of the button-press. This is where Cranberry think they're great, bucking the trend against the numerous automated 'pass and shoot' games where the computer takes over and effectively alleviates much of the skill factor from the games player.

Without wishing to pontificate too deeply over what is after all a piece of entertainment, this does raise the question of who you are when you play a football game. Obviously, in a *Doom* game you're the man with the guns. But in football – or any comparable team sport – are you the manager, the coach, God, or some kind of King of Space? Or are you representative of the team as a whole, your soul passing to the players down the wire of your joypad? Should you expect your players to show some degree of innate competence, or should you be responsible for their every move?

Cranberry clearly believe the latter, as even bringing the ball under control requires timing and skill. *SuperMatch Soccer* is certainly no pick-up-and-play affair, and has an appreciable learning curve. At first it appears to be blind football, with only a bell in the ball required to complete the macabre image. But with practice, progress can eventually be made to the point where it resembles a third-division simulator. Viewers of ITV's *Nationwide Goals Extra* will be familiar with the form: sluggish players, misplaced passes, glaring misses, pinball-style goalmouth scrambles, horrendous goalkeeping errors, and goals scored with every part of the anatomy.

Rank decision

***SuperMatch Soccer* features some rudimentary international competitions, though their rankings don't quite match those of FIFA – Denmark's inexplicably high placing coincides with a programmer called Jörgen Lundman.**



1. Brazil
2. Spain
3. Denmark
4. Germany
5. Netherlands
6. Russia
7. England
8. Italy
9. France
10. Columbia
11. Argentina
12. Czech Rep
13. Norway
14. Japan
15. S. Africa
16. Scotland
17. Sweden
18. USA
19. Portugal
20. Australia
21. Belgium
22. Rep. Ireland
23. N. Ireland
24. Wales





(Above left) The penalty system is average, and you won't see many spectacular goals. More scrambled efforts (right).

Score a goal

Contrary to the beliefs of know-nothing armchair buffoons, lower-division football isn't always the tedious, soul-destroying journey to the outer recesses of human misery that it's made out to be. It can actually sometimes be quite exciting. And the same is true of *SuperMatch Soccer*. After all, a goal is a goal, and it's not how, but how many that's important. Dramatic diving headers and arcing volleys from outside the area are pretty thin on the ground, but the game isn't short of goalmouth action by any means, with numerous near-misses drawing the requisite 'oohs' and 'aahs' from the participants.

To get the best from the game, you have to learn how to play it, rather than simply treating it as just another football game. Instead of relying on always playing balls to other players' feet, it's often better to play the ball into space and have players run on to it.

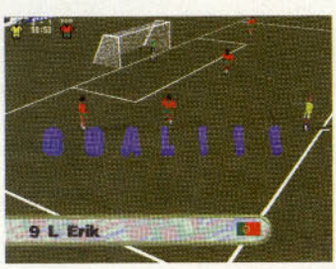
Of course, the various buttons utilised in playing the game require a degree of manual dexterity and no small physical effort, and blistered fingers are an occupational hazard. But with a couple of days' practice under your belt you should be able to beat a newcomer without fail. And that's the point: to be good, you have to *get* good.

SuperMatch Soccer is by no means the finished article, and only a liar and a cheat would claim otherwise. The sound is perfunctory at best, with no commentary, and the crowd noise is akin to holding a shell to your ear. The game clearly resides in the No Frills section of the gaming supermarket, but there is definitely something about it. Playability, anyone? Z

Anoraknophobia

In football games, accuracy is everything. Unfortunately Acclaim have bottled it, and all the player names in *SuperMatch Soccer* are clearly made up. It is possible to edit them, although if you're going to be that anal about it you might as well store your football programmes in a laminated folder.









(Above) Ludicrous celebrations are par for the course. (Left) England practising the time-honoured aeroplane move. *SuperMatch Soccer* features a number of made-up stadia, of which this is one.

In Perspective

The PC is hardly shy of football games at the moment, and with the World Cup looming a further flurry is expected. *SuperMatch Soccer* takes a different approach to most of them, and to some extent it works. Although not quite world-class, there are certainly worse games.

SuperMatch Soccer

Actua Soccer 2

FIFA: RTWC

Kick Off 98

Match Day

Tech Specs

Memory: 16Mb

Processor: P90

Graphics: VGA/SVGA

Sound: DirectX compatible

Controls: Gamepad, keyboard, joystick

Score

It's cheap and it looks it.

75

Price: £19.99

Release date: TBC

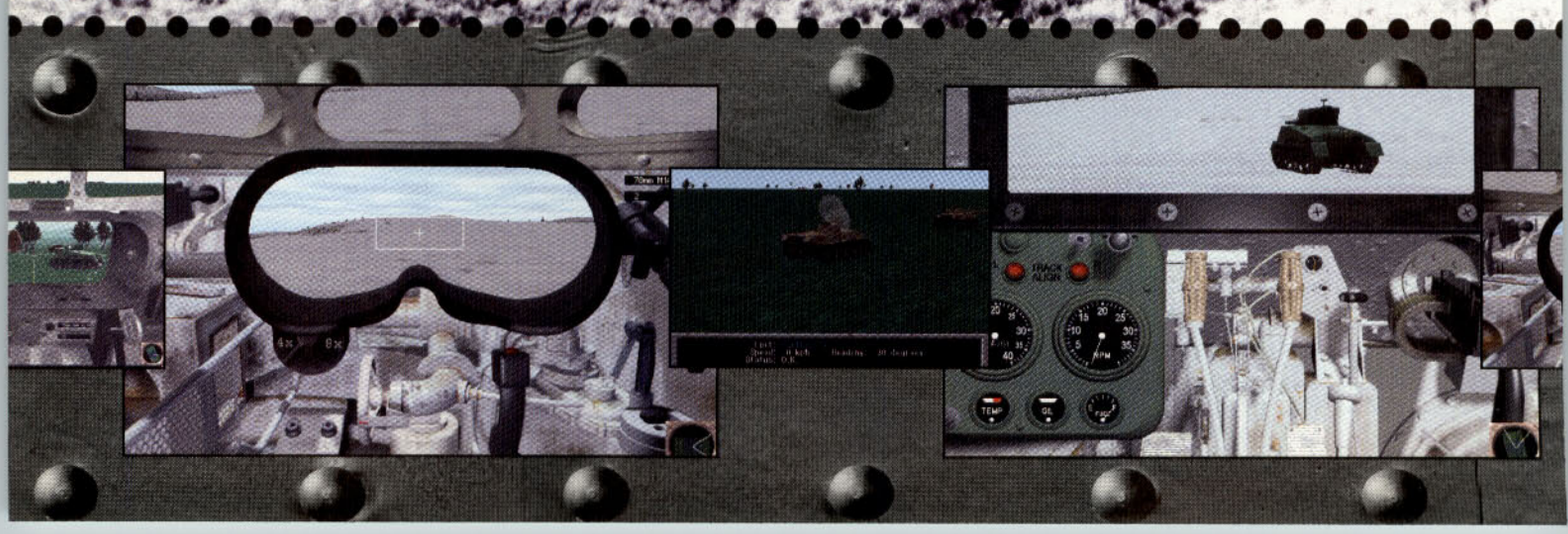
Publisher: Acclaim

Telephone: 0171 344 5000

Website: www.acclaimnation.com

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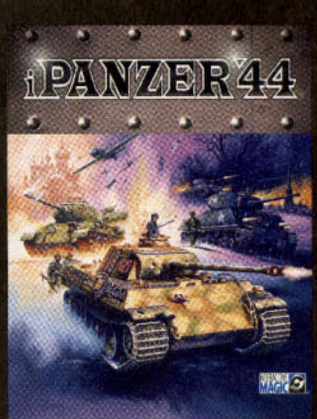




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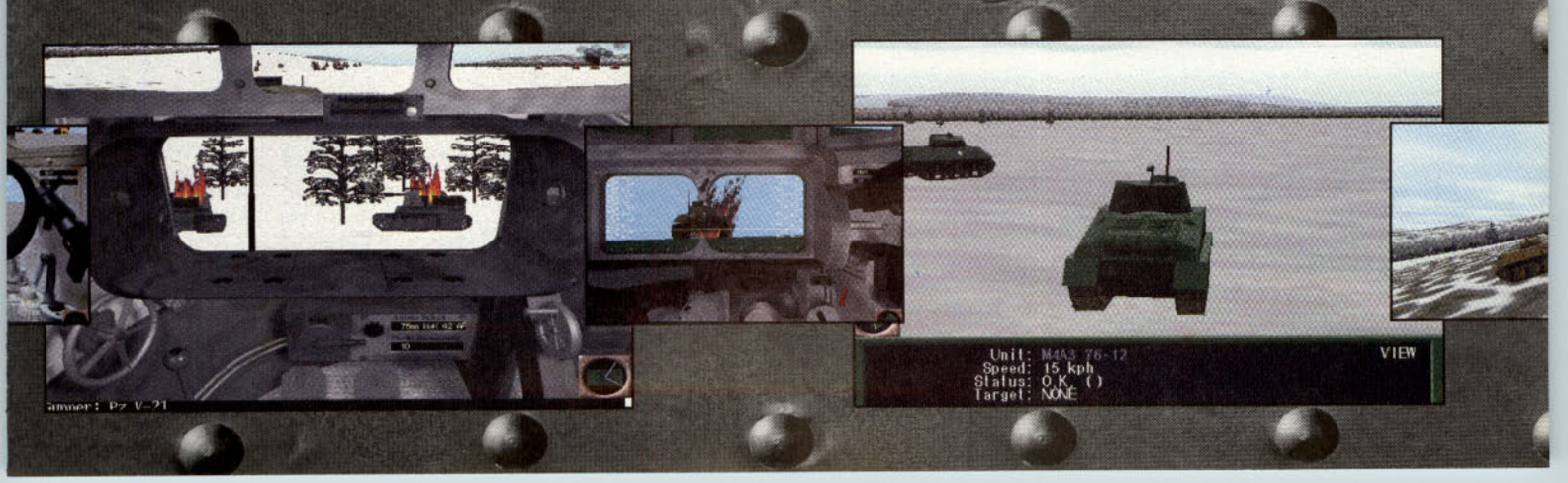


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INTERACTIVE MAGIC™



Red Line Racer

Steve Hill buffs up his helmet and straddles a throbbing beast (reviews a motorbike game).



Snow news is good news. (Sorry.)

IN THE DAYS WHEN DICKIE DAVIES' grey hair was confined to a streak, motorcycle racing was one of the mainstays of ITV's *World Of Sport*, along with speedway and, of course, wrestling, grapple fans. Rainy Saturday afternoons were vaguely bearable, the magnetic Barry Sheene was a household name, and America's bizarrely monickered Randy Mamola always guaranteed a smirk.

Great days indeed. And Ubi Soft are now set to relive them with the release of *Red Line Racer*. Of course they're not. That would be ridiculous. But it is a motorcycle racing game. Taking the helm *(Handlebars? It's a bike, not a boat – Ed)* of a superbike of your choice, you are placed at the back of a field of 20 and given three laps in which to plough your way to the front, weaving in and out of the traffic with some style. The tracks are themed around such disparate environments as Alpine, English country lane, beach, and desert canyon, with further courses becoming available in a performance-related manner. There's no actual championship mode as such though, which is becoming something of a worrying trend in racing games. Not worrying in the sense of impending doom or imminent bloody conflict, obviously, but it's all relative.



Token tokenism

Graphically, for the 3D cardholders among you it all looks very nice. In fact it looks like pretty much every other 3Dfx game, but that's another story. A token helicopter looms into view every so often, and the token lens flare is thrown about liberally, giving it an *Easy Rider* feel, albeit accompanied by shit generic 'game' music of the worst kind. In the third-person view, the rider's arse shifts around in his seat in a fairly convincing fashion, and the bike leans over until leather-clad knee scrapes hot tar. This is all the more frightening in first-person, where the horizon lurches about violently with the negotiation of every bend. Furthermore, the inclusion of a turbo button enables you to pull some impressive wheelies, thus impressing any watching girls.

Further hilarity comes in the form of secret 'bikes', including a dinosaur, the Criterion dog logo and the craft out of *Sub Culture*. Best of all though is a *Quadrophenia*-style scooter, enabling you to give it your best Phil Daniels impression. Unfortunately, pleasuring Leslie Ash in an alley isn't part of the deal.

Raggy dolls

One of the more impressive aspects of the game – and the one causing most merriment in the office – is the spectacular crash sequences. Get it wrong and your rider is tossed into the air like a rag doll, screaming in pain and flailing pathetically as his fragile body is shattered by the immediate scenery. In real life – whatever that is – if he was lucky enough to survive, the next few months would be a long, tortuous road to recovery, eating through a straw and becoming a burden to his friends and family. However, *Red Line Racer* is not a documentary, and your plucky rider is soon back on his trusty steed, happy and ready to ride again. Which is nice.



(In circle) Oh my God! Oh Jesus Christ! Oh *no*! Give it too much wellie and the rider will break every bone in his body (but be roaring off again in seconds).





In Perspective

Motorbike games are nowhere near as popular as car-based affairs, either because they're harder to make or just a bit too limited. Either way, it would have received a much better score if it was priced more keenly, like the *Screamer* games and the excellent *Ultim@te Race Pro*.

Red Line Racer

Road Rash

Moto Racer

Manx TT

Tech Specs

Memory: 32Mb
Processor: P133
Graphics: 3D accelerator card only
Sound: All major sound cards
Controls: Keyboard, joystick, mouse

Score

If you must own a bike game, then this one is the best to date.

78

Price: £39.99
Release date: Out now
Publisher: Ubi Soft
Telephone: 0181 944 9000
Website: www.ubisoft.com

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Ultim@te Race Pro

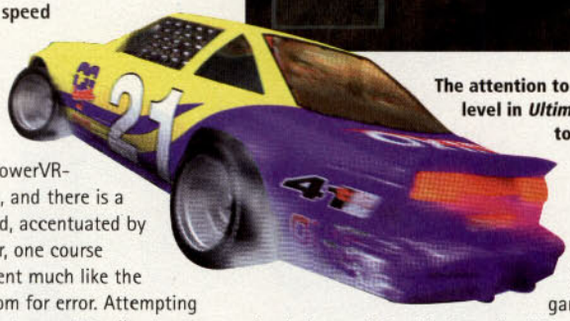
PC ZONE Recommended

We continue our stringent policy of giving driving games to malco-ordinated, vehicularly challenged inadequates. Steve Hill, start your engine.



LOOK CLOSELY AT THE SURROUNDING pictures. Now imagine them a lot bigger and moving at high speed into your face. That, in a nutshell, is the *Ultim@te Race Pro* experience; although what's going on with that '@' is anyone's guess.

For those 3Dfx-ed up, or indeed PowerVR-ed up, it's a handsome looking game, and there is a tangible sensation of speed to be had, accentuated by some perilous obstacles. In particular, one course features a toll booth-type arrangement much like the Severn Bridge, which leaves little room for error. Attempting to squeeze through a car-width gap at over 100 miles per hour, it's difficult not to flinch, despite the fact that there's no risk of personal injury, barring a freak monitor explosion.



The attention to detail at every level in *Ultim@te Race Pro* is totally awesome.

Can't drive, won't drive

By far the best thing about *Ultim@te Race Pro*, though, is the way the cars handle – that is, totally unrealistically.









Kalisto have succeeded in creating a game rather than a simulation, and for this they should be applauded. Within minutes, it's possible to throw your car around with little concern for the Highway Code, fellow road users or the immediate scenery. Braking at the last second, performing an unlikely 180-degree turn and accelerating out of a bend is pretty much par for the course. If the car begins to slew violently across the road, easing off the gas for a second enables you to escape with no more than a few skid marks – on both the road and the lining of your tanga briefs. Furthermore, high-speed collisions result in only superficial damage and the loss of a few seconds. This is all as it should be; any *Top Gear* dullard who insists on realism can go and sit in traffic with the rest of the drones. Three-point turns and double-declutching are not the stuff of fantasy.

Dip, don't dazzle

As for token quibbles: the headlights are a bit odd, and the turning circle could be tighter – far too much reliance is placed on the handbrake turn. But the biggest flaw is the lack of a Championship mode, which is provincial sloppiness at its worst. Ultim@tely (clever wording, cheers) though, *Ultim@te Race Pro* is a very cool game.

Network heaven

Ultim@te Race Pro caters for people with a LAN of high-end Pentiums (people who work on PC magazines, then), although even with only three players there was a degree of jerking in evidence. As well as hot racing action, Ultim@te Arena is the venue for some superb deathmatch encounters. Indeed, the game managed to usurp *Quake II* for upwards of an hour, leading to all manner of office-based fun. For taunting purposes, the keys F1 to F5 can be used to send messages, which are inevitably of the foul and abusive variety; and it wasn't long before the default settings such as "Kiss my asphalt!" were altered to something rather more insulting!

In Perspective

There are more driving games available for the PC than there are hairs on a gibbon's bottom. Consequently, coming up with one that stands out from the crowd is a tricky task. *Ultim@te Race Pro* unashamedly goes for the arcade approach, and is one of the best of its ilk, particularly for the 'nice' price of 20 quid.

Ultim@te Race Pro

Network Q RAC Rally

Screamer Rally

Pod

Tech Specs

Memory: 16Mb

Processor: P133

Graphics: SVGA

Sound: All major sound cards

Controls: Keyboard, joystick, steering wheel

Score

Start the car!

88

Price: £19.99

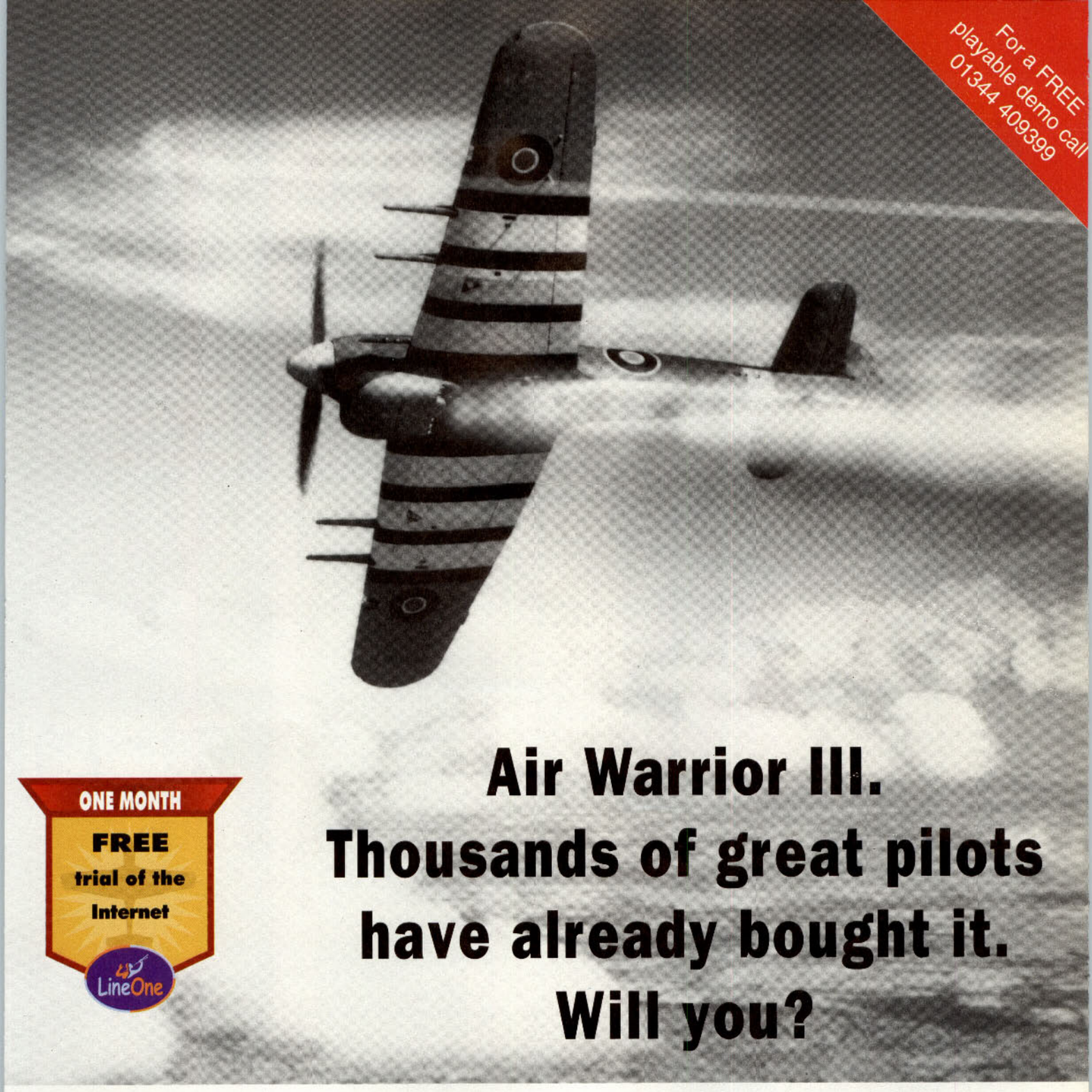
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Last Bronx

PC ZONE Recommended

Patrick McCarthy has sworn solemnly never to take the path of violence. These days, he always drives.

IT'S BEEN A WHILE SINCE WE SAW A decent beat 'em up on the PC. And this is a more than decent beat 'em up, with just about everything you could wish for. It's set in the spookily feasible near future, in which the Japanese economy has collapsed and gangs now roam Neo Tokyo, beating the shit out of one another. They soon get bored and decide to settle things with a tournament. So off we go on a roller-coaster ride to Fractured Skullsville...



(Above) It's at times like this that you find a rigorous personal hygiene regime really stands you in good stead.



Take your pick

There are all the usual options – Arcade mode (pretend you're in an arcade, except it's not costing you a fiver a minute), Survival mode (take people on one at a time, but your energy isn't replenished between bouts), Team Battle (ruck mob-handed, tag team-style) and PC mode (a story-telling mode in which you watch Manga-style movies about your character's life between bouts). You can also fight two-player on the same machine or over a serial link, and up to six-player rumbling action is yours for the asking with a LAN or modem.

Where's your tool?

If you haven't seen a beat 'em up for a year or so, you'll be pleasantly surprised by how much less American beat 'em up types have become. There isn't a *Miami Vice* haircut or shiny jacket with the sleeves rolled up in sight. There's also a marked lack of enthusiasm for turning up unarmed – basically, everyone's tooled up.

The characters – there are eight of them – are great. Among them there's Lisa, who basically lets you (finally) get to beat up Baby Spice; Nagi, another blonde chick, whose weapon of choice appears to be two kebab skewers; and Zaimoku, a monster with a dyed goatee beard who is wielding either, a) a very big mallet indeed, or b) a sofa on the end of a scaffolding pole. There's also Kurosawa, who – as befits a man named after a film director – seems to prefer to beat people over the head with a tripod; and most unorthodox of all there's Yoko, who enjoys attacking people with two sawn-off legs from an IKEA coffee table.

It's done in a 3D stylee – except the camera sticks to a side-on view at all times. But you can jump up onto walls, and roll in and out of the screen. And other cool stuff.





(Top left) "Perhaps now you'll think twice about dissing my Davy Crockett hat!" cried Lesley. (Left) The old twin-vibrator attack never fails.

Ho ho ho

Basically, it's a great laugh. At the easiest level, you can get quite a way through it just by hitting buttons quickly, but there are over 40 moves per character to learn as you get more skilled. You'll do better if you have a decent gamepad or two, of course, but it's quite playable even with two keyboard-using players. The Manga-style presentation is cool, and is for once echoed in-game, with the characters looking the same as in the movies. Refreshingly, all the female characters have their tits well covered. The LAN and modem multi-player options are a bonus – and probably safer than playing two-up on the same machine, which always escalates into real violence. All you have to do now is convince some other PC users to buy it.

In Perspective

Decent beat 'em ups on the PC are few and far between, but this is one of the best we've seen for ages. There's probably a supposedly humorous Sega-type reference in there somewhere, but we can't be arsed to work one out. Suggestions on a postcard, please.

Last Bronx

Virtua Fighter

StreetFighter II

Tech Specs

Memory: 16Mb

Processor: P133 (P166 recommended)

Graphics: SVGA

Sound: All major sound cards

Controls: Joystick, gamepad, keyboard

Win 95 Only!

Direct 3D

Score

Slapstick fun. And slaphammer fun. And slap-plank fun. Get the picture?

87

Price: £39.99

Release date: Out now

Publisher: Sega

Telephone: 0181 995 3399

Website: www.sega.com

dan Personal Computers The People's Choice

TOCA

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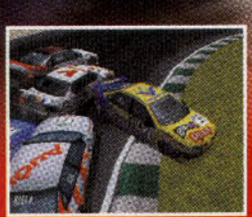
EDGE MAGAZINE 9/10

PC GAMING WORLD SAYS ★★★★★ PLAY IT

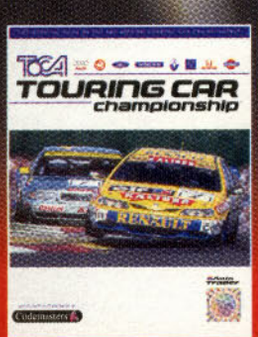
PC GAMING WORLD
"A great driving experience, excellent realism - too damn good"

Which of these codes enables you to view the action from an overhead camera?

CMMICRO CMOVERH CMTOPCAM (2 of 3)


Crash Out


Bump & Grind




Thrash It Out


Cane It

PlayStation

Codemasters

PC CD-ROM

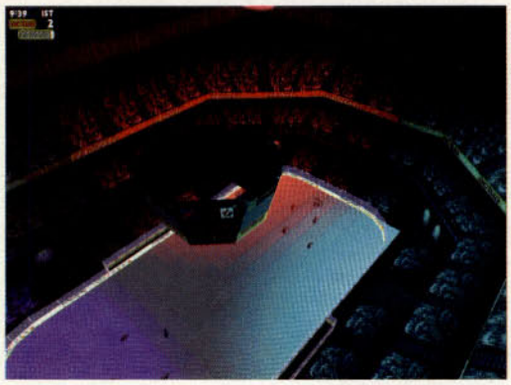
www.TouringCar.com

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1997'S REAL CARS, REAL TRACKS, REAL TEAMS, REAL DRIVERS, REAL VIEWS

TOCA

Actua Hockey





(Above left) I thought I told you not to go for the cheap seats? (Above) "The annual Costumed Farting World Championships kicked off today in Alberta..."

Patrick McCarthy got surprisingly excited when we told him we had a hockey game for him to look at. In fact, when he left the building we could have sworn he was trying to hide a full-on chubby.

DAMN. I THOUGHT THIS WAS GOING TO be field hockey – I was looking forward to a St Trinians simulation, with women running about in gymslips, beating the shit out of their opponents with pieces of wood. Speaking of which, did you ever notice the weird effect that time had on the girls of St Trinians? At 12 they're about three feet tall and three feet wide, with hair that looks like it's been set on fire. They go away for the summer holiday, and when they come back they're slatternly 30-year-old women with stockings and stilettos, and mouths that look like they could suck the top off a fire extinguisher. (Although admittedly they seem to be wearing the same skirts.) But there's nothing in between... Most odd.

All of which has nothing to do with this game, because it's ice hockey, not hockey. Mind you, if a games company wanted to inject a bit of Lara Croft-style madness into a sports game, hockey's the way to go: large-breasted women, short skirts, untrammelled violence... it's got the lot. Alright, so you might have to give them thighs like prop forwards, but that never did Chun Li out of *StreetFighter* any harm.

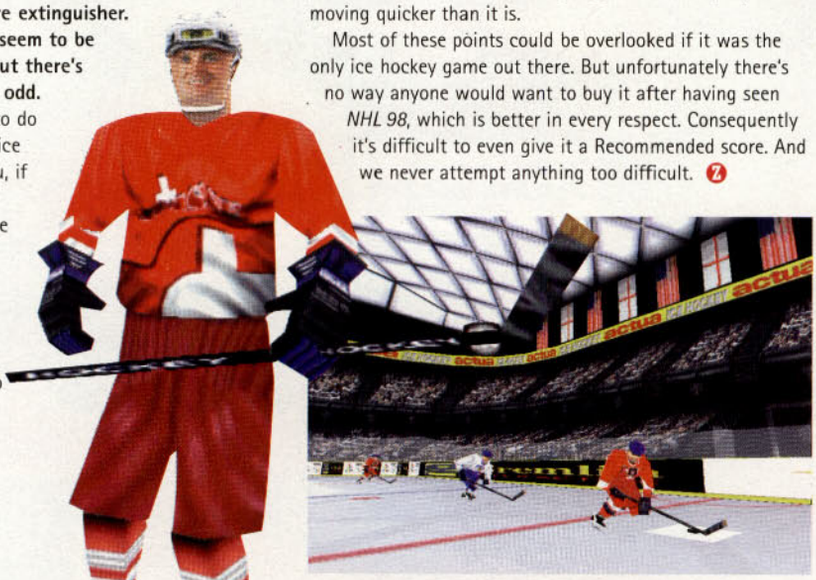
Ice and easy (ho ho)

Ice hockey, then. Anyone going up against the game-playing meisterwerk they call *NHL 98* has to come up with something pretty amazing to get any attention. And while *Actua Hockey* is decent enough, it's by no means as good as EA's festival of fun. The graphics here are pretty good (as long as you have a 3D card, otherwise the players look like a shotgunned cereal packet), and when you score there's a nice lighting effect that's a bit like a cross between Holiday On Ice and a sixth-form disco. The controls are simple and intuitive, and it moves pretty quickly (but on anything less than a 166 you'll see more jerking than on a Boy Scouts' camping trip). And it's got the Olympic licence, which means you can play through a complete tournament at Nagano.

Ice plops

On the other hand, the commentary sounds a bit home-made and the player selection can be frustrating – set it to Auto and it makes unwise selections when you're defending; but set it to Manual and you don't even get automatic control of the player with the puck. It's also not unknown for two teams to take to the ice in identical uniforms – which is less than helpful. And putting 'whizz marks' on the puck when it's hit about isn't going to convince people it's moving quicker than it is.

Most of these points could be overlooked if it was the only ice hockey game out there. But unfortunately there's no way anyone would want to buy it after having seen *NHL 98*, which is better in every respect. Consequently it's difficult to even give it a Recommended score. And we never attempt anything too difficult.



Select the 'Manual' option and you don't even get automatic control of the player with the puck.

In Perspective

If you've always wanted to play through an Olympic hockey tournament, this is the game for you. It's got every national team out there; although you could argue about some of the ratings. In every other respect, however, it's inferior to *NHL 98*. And *NHL 97*, come to that.

Actua Hockey

NHL 98

NHL 97

Sim St Trinians

Tech Specs

Memory: 16Mb
Processor: P90
Graphics: SVGA
Sound: All major sound cards
Controls: Joystick, gamepad, keyboard

Score

Not bad, but we've all seen much better.

78

Price: £39.99
Release date: Out now
Publisher: Gremlin Interactive
Telephone: 01142 753423
Website: www.gremlin.co.uk

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Review ZONE Extra!

This month we've squeezed in even more games in an effort to give you the complete guide to every new release – good and bad.

PC Zone Classic



ULTIMA COLLECTION

PC ZONE Classic

What we have here, ladies and gentlemen, is a comprehensive history of role-playing on the PC. Every single *Ultima* game released (I to VIII) is present and correct in this collection. The later *Ultimas* included here are worth the asking price alone, but let's take a look at what you actually get for your money.

Ultimas I to *IV*: very basic graphics, massive game worlds, brilliant puzzles and incredibly addictive gameplay. *Ultima V*: more of the same, with better graphics and full party development. *Ultima VI*: a major step forward for the series. With vastly improved graphics, better character development and true character interaction, this was the first game to really put the *Ultima* series on the map, and it's still as playable today as it was then. *Ultima VII*: still considered by many (including myself) to be the best role-playing game of all time. Origin took everything that was good about *Ultima VI* and made it bigger and better. Personally, my fondest memories of *Ultima VII* are the conversations between the characters, which at times were absolutely hilarious. Fab. Classic. A bit good. Get the idea? *Ultima VIII*: slightly disappointing in as much as you control a single character, as opposed to a whole party. Widely criticised for requiring the best PC in the world at the time, this is now no longer the case, of course. Graphically far superior to *Ultima VII*, it's still a fantastic game, although not quite as compulsive and life-stealing as its predecessor.

I would strongly advise any developers currently working on a role-playing game to check out this collection immediately, because within it are the definitive benchmarks against which their game will be measured.

And my advice to you? Go out and buy it. Buy it right now – every home should have one.

Chris Anderson

Publisher: Origin/Electronic Arts
Tel: 01753 549442
Price: £39.99

90



SABRE ACE

Flight sims have been coming thick and fast of late, but what differentiates this one from the 1001 other titles is that it's based during the Korean Air War – the only time that Russians and Americans 'officially' fought against each other. In gaming terms, it's been a very long time since anyone's seen a jet-based sim set during the pre-radar period (the only one I can remember is *Flight Of The Intruder*, which was set in Vietnam, ancient and crap). So addicts looking for something a bit different



should find it here. Well, in theory...

Starting off, you're treated to a prosaic intro. After that, you're greeted by a menu that enables the usual choice of career or quick mission, and once you've set things up to your liking it's up, up and away... And suddenly things go from bad to worse.

Firstly, the graphics. Look at the screenshots – have you ever seen such bad texture-mapping? Well, not in a flight sim, no. Sadly even a 3D card won't help: at 2000 feet rivers seem to flow over hills and textures don't match up at all; at 20,000 it looks like you're in orbit, and some textures aren't even there.

And there are gameplay problems too: some of the key combinations are illogical, and the accelerated time function is too slow. Players who rely on radar and guided bombs will obviously find things hard going. And because it's based on Korea, you don't get the usual tours of duty in other countries.

Anyone interested in the Korean War is likely to be disappointed; too many details are missing to appease serious sim fans, and the lack of any arcade functions will repel everyone else. Basically, avoid.

Richie Shoemaker

Publisher: VIE
Tel: 0171 368 2255
Price: £39.99

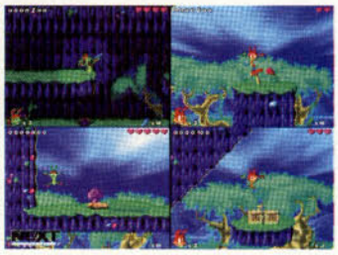
34



JAZZ JACKRABBIT 2

You don't really need to know the plot behind this, do you? The raison d'être behind 40 levels of chasm-leaping, tortoise-twatting and girlfriend-saving? No, of course not. You want to know whether this, the latest in a dying breed of platform games, is worth buying. Surprisingly enough, *Jazz Jackrabbit 2* is actually a pretty decent game. This time the eponymous hero has been joined by his ganja'd-up brother Spaz who, contrary to the effects of the demon weed on most people, is pretty tuned in to the task at hand. You can choose to play either of them in the quest to rescue Eva Earlong, Jazz's bird (or bunny), and the usual platform tricks and traps are there to help and hinder you.

The graphics are on the diminutive side compared to those of other platform games, but this means a lot more of the game area is on-screen – handy for planning your next move. The



'ambience' of the game is different as well. Though naturally linear, the levels almost have the feel of an adventure – almost. Thankfully, the obligatory timer has been left off so you can ponder your way through the levels. And with the inclusion of various weapons, you even get to deathmatch bunny-style.

Co-op, Capture the Flag and race games have been implemented, but while it doesn't hold a candle to the likes of *Quake*, that's not so say it isn't fun. Consider it a trainer for those eager to frag their way up the deathmatch career ladder. With *Jazz Jackrabbit 1* and a level editor included, you can't really knock it for value. And if you don't usually go for this sort of thing, you might just find yourself pleasantly surprised.

Richie Shoemaker

Pub'r: United Interactive
Tel: 0171 579 4113
Price: £34.99

71



THE QUIVERING

Borrowing from almost every horror cliché available, this adventure owes almost as much to films like *Evil Dead* as it does to the text-based adventures of old. As Josh you must rid the world of the demonic 'Big D' by collecting imps and objects littering the way.

The game kicks off outside an English pub, and it's not long before you find your uncle (transformed into a raven), who tells you what's been going on. The developers have tried admirably to inject humour, and while there are a few good lines, it's hard not to cringe at the attempts at facetiousness from our disparaging hero.

Graphically, it's reminiscent of the recent *Journeyman 3* adventure where you have a full 360-degree field of view and pre-rendered movement between the various locations. It actually works very well, even though having to press the spacebar to skip to the next place soon becomes awkward.

As mentioned previously, the 'feel' of the game is decidedly old-school: access to certain areas is only allowed by possession of the relevant object, and without the correct items in your inventory, death always seems to be just around the corner. This problem is compounded by the lack of limitless savegames – each imp you collect allows you to save the game once.



The adventuring itself is pitched at just the right difficulty, though seasoned adventurers will hardly find it original.

Some of it's frustrating (such as not being able to skip through speech, for example), but on the whole *The Quivering* is a plucky little adventure that, while it doesn't break any new ground, is certainly worthy of approval for simply being entertainment.

Richie Shoemaker

Pub'r: Alternative Software
Tel: 01977 797777
Price: £39.99
73



747 FOR MS FLIGHT SIMULATOR 98

Like Microsoft's *Flight Sim* series, 747 jumbos are big and not particularly nippy, but very nice to have a ride in. Oh, and they've been around for ages too. Tenuous links aside, one of the better points about *Flight Simulator* is that Microsoft have made it an 'open architecture', which means that, as with *Quake*, third parties can develop planes and scenery that can be added to the basic program.



747 is a set of add-ons for both *FS98* and *FS95* based on the Boeing 747. Launched in 1968, 747s have been in service ever since, largely because of the nice spiral staircase and bar area that makes flying long distances so relaxing for busy execs.

747 for *MS FS98* gives you nine different jumbos to try out, and three new scenery areas – Frankfurt, Düsseldorf and Nice. The planes are mainly German, too, which isn't surprising as they were developed with the help of a Lufthansa pilot.

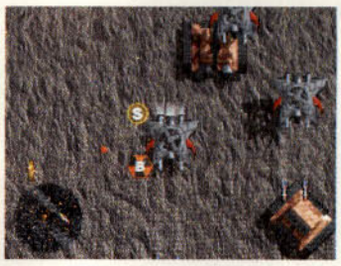
The flight models feel pretty good, it only takes about 20 minutes to get into the air. I tried to loop a couple of times, but this ended in carnage. The control panels are also hugely baffling, with absolutely tons of dials, which should appeal to realism fans.

The biggest problem with *747* is that it's too specific. It's all very nice having extra planes to fly, but there are tons of these available on the Internet for free. The scenery's nice too, but again you can get this for nowt on the Net.

Unfortunately, the most interesting period in German aviation is WWII, not the 1970s, so unless you're obsessed with German 747s I'd wait until someone releases Heinkel for *FS98*.

Dave Mathieson

Publisher: Data Becker
Tel: 01420 22707
Price: £19.95
40

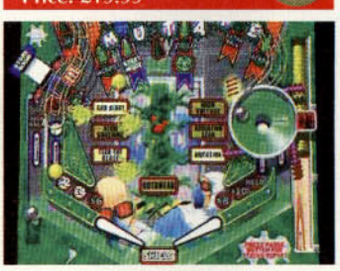


DEMONSTAR

Demonstar (successor to the mild shareware hit *Raptor*) whisks us back to the flat, scrolling world of games' pleasant past. For those old enough to remember, it should prove to be a welcome diversion – but that's all. Waves of swooping aliens and side-firing homing missiles are par for the course, as are the obligatory end-of-level muthaships and occasional asteroid storms. For a ten-minute blast it's perfect entertainment. The sound is big and beefy, and the graphics are detailed without causing too much confusion – but play it for half an hour and you'll feel like you've been wearing onion spectacles – the viewing window is so tiny. You shouldn't have to switch resolution to enjoy a game, and doing so for *Demonstar* isn't worth the effort.

Richie Shoemaker

Publisher: Instant Access
Tel: 0181 205 2596
Price: £19.99
61

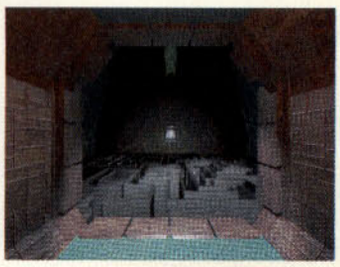


BALLS OF STEEL

Balls Of Steel (a reference to *Duke Nukem*'s love spuds?) is a pinball game. One table is based on Duke himself; the other four are equally macho, involving diffusing bombs and killing aliens. As a straightforward shift-key 'em up it's instantly playable: it's fast, colourful and smattered with excellent graphical touches. However, we'd like to have seen other features that only a PC can provide – as in the excellent *Pro Pinball: Timeshock*. The top-down view works well, but the game would benefit from a wider choice of view-points (including 3D). But the major problem is the crappy tilt feature. OK, it's hard to simulate, but you'd expect at least some sort of reaction from the computer when you hit the spacebar.

Richie Shoemaker

Publisher: GT Interactive
Tel: 0171 258 3791
Price: £24.99
70

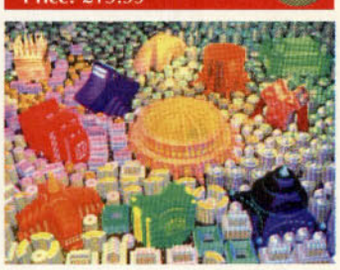


WEIRD

Strange things exist in this crazy world... but *Weird* isn't one of them. 'Boring' is probably more apt to describe this cross between *The Fortean Times* and a bad *Zork* adventure. The 'aim' is to wander down dark corridors, looking into windows to discover vaguely interesting facts about people born with extra fingers or two heads. Occasionally, and to progress to the next level, you have to complete a challenge; the first one demands that you unlock a colour-coded door by remembering and copying 'Simple Simon' style which colours light up in the correct order (yawn). The graphics are detailed, but the screen-flipping technique died years ago with *Myth*. If *Weird* lived up to its name, it would have fared so much better.

Richie Shoemaker

Pub'r: MacMillan Interactive
Tel: 0171 881 8000
Price: £19.99
20



ZAPITALISM DELUXE

Zapitalism Deluxe is heralded on the packaging as "the fantasy business game all strategy fans have been waiting for". It's a confident statement, but after only ten minutes you can't help but wonder if someone slipped the wrong CD in the box by accident.

Your task is to select bizarre goods such as mamo-vapour and sell them to make enough profit so as to allow corporate expansion from your humble corner shop beginnings. This may sound all well and good, but in reality *Zapitalism Deluxe* is a thin excuse for entertainment. The hi-res graphics are not unattractive and the game tries to be quirky, but it's not long before you realise that playing *Monopoly* instead would be a lot more fun.

Danielle Rhodes

Publisher: Instant Access
Tel: 0181 205 2596
Price: £19.99
47

Budget ZONE

Strapped for cash but need to score your gaming fix? Don't worry, you don't have to go without – here's Richie Shoemaker with a few nicely-priced games from Psygnosis that won't bleed your anaemic wallet as dry as the Sahara desert.

PC Zone Classic



DISCWORLD II

PC ZONE Classic

Some people fail to find Terry Pratchett's novels amusing. Be warned – if you fall into this category, own a PC and play *Discworld II*, you could unwittingly find yourself liking and buying his unending series of books. You see, it's a great game. And that – whether you love or loathe him – is fact.

Discworld I was a superb game. A little difficult, perhaps, but superb all the same. And as should be the case with such things, the sequel is even better. Not only has the 'hard-bastard' factor been lowered, but the graphics have been tweaked and the irksome puzzles of the original ditched in favour of quests which are more relevant to the story. Non-adventuring types will no doubt heave a sigh of relief to find that they might actually have a clue what to do with their bizarre inventory – gone are the days when you had to combine a weasel with a pair of knickers to open a door.

If you hadn't guessed already, this point-and-clicker once again puts you back in the role of reluctant hero Rincewind. His task is to seek out and help Death who, by the hand of bored terrorist faction, has gone missing. Of course, (un)expected events chuck spanners in the works and it soon becomes apparent that you have to do more than just find things and blindly see if they fit together.

The zany plot is well-crafted over the four episodes, and the animated cast is brought to life by some exceptional British talent, namely Eric Idle and Nigel Planer. There may be too much dialogue for some people, and the humour doesn't always hit home, but if you're a Pratchett fan you'll love it – and if you're not you soon will be. *Discworld II* is simply one of the best adventure games ever created.

Reviewed: 44
Price: £14.99

91



LEMMINGS PAINTBALL

The *Lemmings* games have always been characterised by simple and addictive gameplay, even though the sound and visuals were arguably a bit dodgy even back then. In stark contrast, *Lemmings Paintball* seems like a watered-down variant. It's not that the gameplay is dated, it's just that *Lemmings Paintball* has little to recommend it. Players control up to four lemmings and have to traverse the isometric landscape, pulling levers and shooting other lemmings to find a flag. As an all-out shoot 'em up like *Cannon Fodder* it might have been bearable, but the two elements of solving puzzles and shooting don't sit well together. If it wasn't for the inclusion of the Win95 version of the original, we'd have advised giving it a wide berth.

Not previously reviewed
Price: £14.99

48



KRAZY IVAN

It's a *Doom* clone that thinks it's a mech game and, surprise surprise, its hero is a paranoid schizophrenic. Funny, that. *Krazy Ivan* is based in Russia in the near future and, rather than fighting off corruption or hyper-inflation, Ivan has to fight off waves of villainous cyberdudes who are out to turn his power armour back into its constituent elements. Sadly, the game doesn't have the appeal of either *Doom* or *MechWarrior* (its closest relatives); it's bogged down by a limited control method, and becomes incredibly annoying when the enemy come trundling out from the near distance and blow you to kingdom come. Its only saving grace is the occasional appearance of Sarah Stockbridge in dodgy Ruski accent mode.

Reviewed: 45
Price: £9.99

41



DEADLINE

Pants

As an SAS-style commander it's up to you to save the free world from hostages and terrorists – and it's hard work, not because it's challenging but because it's infuriating. The hard work comes from planning successful missions down to almost unnecessary detail, and fighting out isometric real-time battles *X-COM*-style. The control interface is one of the most irksome ever seen, the planning missions are irritating, and you'll probably end up shouting obscenities when fighting it out – not because your so-called elite soldiers can't shoot for toffee, but because they can't climb the simplest of stairs. The best thing about *Deadline* is that it comes with a free SAS Survival Guide – handy for those trips to Swansea.

Not previously reviewed
Price: £9.99

36



LOMAX

LemmingLand is under threat, and Evil Ed's up to no good. His heinous hench-lemmings are on the march, and only by jumping from platform to platform, from level to level, can Lomax save the day. Yes, *Lomax* is another formulaic platformer, except that this one's got lemmings and is not afraid to use them. As with all games of this nature, the idea is to collect pretty-coloured spinny gems and jump over nasty things that follow set patterns, to eventually get to the end of the level only to do it all over again over a different-coloured landscape. But do we really need another *Lemmings*-inspired cash-in? Give this to the nippers to keep them quiet, and stick to something more immoral before the games apocalypse comes along.

Reviewed: 52
Price: £9.99

66



THE CITY OF LOST CHILDREN

Both Jeunet & Caro's wonderfully imaginative movie and Psygnosis' eponymously titled adventure game are now available at knock-down prices. However, given the choice we'd go for the film every time *(It's only £4.99 – Ed). The City Of Lost Children* isn't a bad game, but it isn't a great one either. Its *Alone In The Dark*-style of presentation fails to capture the distorted nature and claustrophobic atmosphere of the film, and the unnecessarily clunky in-game mechanics prove frustrating from the off. If you haven't seen the film, you probably won't be disappointed; if you have you'll be able to compare the two, and will no doubt find it needs more than subtitles to keep you going throughout its duration.

Reviewed: 48
Price: £9.99
68



DESTRUCTION DERBY 2

Better than the first one (as sequels should be), *Destruction Derby 2* is a superb crash 'n' smash racing game, save for a few mild irritants: the in-game menus are decidedly clumsy, and gameplay-wise it takes a while to come anywhere in the Top 10. You can even forgive the non-existent multi-player options, because the cars fall apart almost as spectacularly as in *Carmageddon* and the tracks enable some speedy action as well as some excellent crashes. If you think driving games should be fun, you should definitely have *DD2* in your collection. And if you have to play against 'real' opponents, you can always download a patch from the Psygnosis website(www.psygnosis.com).

Reviewed: 46
Price: £14.99
84



RIOT

Sport as we know and love it is under threat. Not from money-grabbing and ruthless businessmen you understand, but from *Riot*, a vicious hybrid of basketball and a good punch to the face. The two teams involved must get a ball to the opposing end, charge it up with plasma and then dunk it in the central hoop, punching the opposition in the face along the way (of course). Sounds like a hoot? Well, it is... sort of. It plays and looks a bit like *Actua Soccer* and is very easy to get the hang of. Play it in VGA mode and you'll find that the graphics will truly test your gameplaying skills; switch to hi-res and things become much easier. Like *Hyperblade*, multi-player options are a bit thin and the violence is very tame, but on budget it's pretty good value.

Not previously reviewed
Price: £9.99
72



CHRONICLES OF THE SWORD

This Arthurian adventure will keep you awake at night – not because it's particularly addictive, but because the main character moves so slowly you'll be nipping off to make coffee so often that you'll end up sweating caffeine. You play Gawain, a wannabe knight of the Round Table, out to prove your worth and stop the evil sorceress Morgana taking over Camelot. Your first task is to find Merlin the wizard, but you'll probably be sidling off to put the kettle on before you've even found your way off the first screen. The clichéd puzzles, though spirited on occasion, involve too much fruitless searching for objects. The graphics are quite good (ropey animation aside), but it's unlikely that you'll see it through to the end.

Reviewed: 39
Price: £9.99
56



ASSAULT RIGS

It may look like you drive about in a tank, but *Assault Rigs* plays more like a first-person shoot 'em up (I ask you, who ever heard of a tank 'side-stepping'?). Still, a game based in the realm of cyberspace can hide a multitude of gaming sins, not least in the underlying storyline. The premise behind *Assault Rigs* is bland (collect gems and blow up enemy rigs), and the game itself is an odd mix of shoot 'em up and puzzle platformer. It's not unplayable, but the gameplay is let down by two distinct elements: the camera views are restrictive and annoying, and the controls are too complicated for the nature of the game. It may have worked on the PlayStation, but obviously on the PC something's been lost in the translation.

Reviewed: 39
Price: £9.99
57



SPEEDSTER

When this racing game first arrived last May, there was a small flurry of excitement over its novel top-down view. But this was followed rapidly by a deep sense of disappointment over the fact that the cars were slow, the graphics confusing and the gameplay boring. A ninja PC was needed to run it at an acceptable speed, and even then the player felt that no matter what car they chose they were somehow jinxed with donkey-like acceleration. It might be a bit nippier on today's PCs, but this only serves to highlight its other faults. If you can be bothered to get used to the confusing tracks without driving into barriers that manage to look like tunnels, you may end up liking it. Take our advice: buy *Ignition* instead.

Reviewed: 52
Price: £9.99
55



ECSTATICA

You know when you have fond memories of a game, only to load it up and shout "Urgh!" at the sight of the graphics? Disheartening, isn't it? Re-enter *Ecstatica*. We all remember the smooth animation, the devious puzzles and the relentless action, but have conveniently forgotten just how blocky VGA graphics actually are. No matter. *Ecstatica* may not be the stunning beauty it once was, but give it a moment and you'll forget about all that SVGA nonsense and just get on with what is essentially a very good and very difficult game. If you already own the sequel there probably isn't much point in buying the original, but for first-timers who want to know what all the fuss was about, it doesn't get much better than this.

Reviewed: 21
Price: £12.99
80



DISCWORLD

You may well ask why you should buy the first *Discworld* adventure when the second one is so damn fine. Well, it's simple: despite its blocky VGA graphics, *Discworld* is still one of the best adventure games ever made. The aim is to rid the land of a theoretically nonexistent dragon, while getting side-tracked into completing more bizarre tasks along the way. It may not be as beautiful as the sequel, but its puzzles are a lot harder (it makes *Day Of The Tentacle* seem like a Sunday stroll in the park); as a result you'll be playing it for a very long time. So if your pre-Pentium PC yearns for something to tax its minuscule four megs, buy this. It's one of the few games of its time that still warrants a respectable score.

Reviewed: 22
Price: £9.99
82


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PIPEX DIAL 90

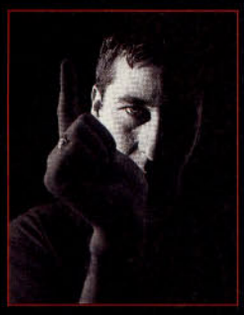
Dialing... Connecting... Connected Disconnecting... Disconnected

ZONE On-Line

Something for everyone

Another legal minefield for retro gaming enthusiasts: console and arcade emulation.

Those who enjoyed our emulators feature last issue will no doubt be pleased to see that there's more this month – namely, console and arcade emulators. Again Charlie Brooker is here to point out the best places to go to explore the phenomenon. Unlike last month, however, the subject of console and arcade emulation is a far more tricky subject to cover – in the eyes of the console companies, at least. Companies such as Nintendo are far more vociferous in their condemnation of the emulation movement, and see it as nothing less than blatant piracy. Again, it's a question of ownership – if you have a copy of the original game, then you are entitled to make a back-up copy; although this defence would be hard to swallow in the case of the arcade machine. Let's face it, not many of us are likely to have a tabletop *Galaxians* in our bedroom. But what console and arcade companies don't seem to understand is that these older games will simply die out and disappear unless they're actually released individually as ROMs.



For those of you who don't give a toss about running old computer games on their PCs, there's plenty of other stuff to digest in this month's *On-Line*. Paul Presley's piece on on-line flight sims is an interesting look at the current direction of the 'electronic battlefield' concept. It seems all we need now are tanks, soldiers and the correct software to link them together, and... voilà: we've got ourselves a realistic war. All played out in one self-contained 3D environment.

Also, in the second part of our regular *Ultima Online* column we see another virtual war raging – only this time between good and evil. Origin, it seems, are now running this 'orcs and goblins' show with aplomb – a number of new plots having been started to spice up proceedings somewhat – and we'll be following the progress in this magazine over the coming months.

Paul Mallinson



Got one of these in your bedroom?

Wave of emulation

Part two: consoles and arcade games

In which gorgeous, pouting Charlie Brooker takes a second glance at the world of nostalgic gaming.

SPACE IS RATHER TIGHT THIS month, so we'll just press on with this second part of our look at the on-line emulation scene. For the background details, refer to our previous issue (you *did* buy last month's *PC Zone*, didn't you?). As ever, please bear in mind the following point, which we're printing in bold red capitals just so you remember it:

IT IS ILLEGAL TO DOWNLOAD ROM IMAGES OF ANY TITLE IF YOU DO NOT OWN A COPY OF THE ORIGINAL GAME.

ARCADE GAMES

Anyone over the age of 20 is likely to have first experienced the joys of computerised entertainment in public – in an arcade. As is the case today, the coin-slot fantasy machines were always several steps ahead of the home systems, and as such had an air of classy superiority about them (a bit like Penelope Keith in *To The Manor Born*, except she didn't play games with boys in exchange for coinage of minor denomination). Even today, you can't beat that 'original arcade feel'. But you *can* emulate it...

Before you go anywhere else, you should visit Dave's Classics, which, since the closure of the excellent Atmospherical Heights site, has become the definitive arcade emulation site on the Web. And the URL's a piece of piss to remember: **www.davesclassics.com.**

Also be sure to check out **www.arrgh.demon.co.uk**, Mat Simpson's beautiful and informative retro gaming übersite. And we're sorry we called you Mat *Johnson* last month, Mat. We're sure you've never sung lead vocals with The The, and you ain't bald neither, guv.

MAME

- **www.media.dsi.unimi.it/mame/**
- **www.davesclassics.com/frames/mame/mamepage.html**

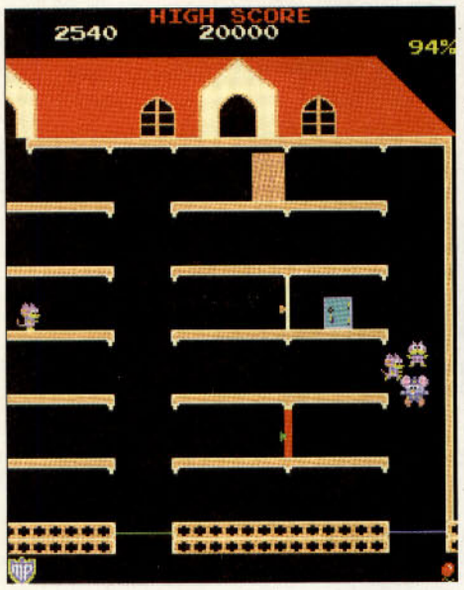
MAME (Multi-Arcade Machine Emulator) is truly the king of all emulators. Part programming miracle, part memory-lane-'em-up, it runs the *original* arcade ROMs of almost every classic title you care to mention; you name it, it's supported: *Pac Man, Star Wars, Spy Hunter, Hyper Sports, Commando, Space Invaders, Zaxxon*... the list goes on and on. In all, 346 games are fully playable using the MAME system. Our current favourite is the infuriatingly addictive *Mappy*, from Namco.

The MAME engine is updated sporadically, with each new release adding to the already large pool of supported titles. And despite a few internal differences currently plaguing this ongoing 'project', it looks set to remain the benchmark for quite some time to come.





(Left) Konami's *Legend Of The Mystical Ninja* runs perfectly on most SNES emulators, but you'll have to own the original to play the ROM legally. (Above) Same for *Zelda* on the GameBoy.





Many classic arcade games (such as *Mappy* – pictured left) are being kept alive by the power of emulation. Old console games, such as the classic PC Engine platformer *Kato & Ken* (above), are also making a comeback thanks to the retro games movement.

Callus
• www.maelstrom.net/callus/
The latest emulator from the people who brought you *Genecyst* and *Nesticle*, *Callus* sets out to replicate Capcom's arcade system of the early '90s. Which means *Final Fight* and *StreetFighter II*, basically. As you can imagine, Capcom themselves are not amused.

RAGE (Real Arcade Game Emulator)
• http://home5.swipnet.se/~w-50884/emulator/download.htm
Another Capcom arcade emulator, but this one also attempts to mimic the SNK Neo-Geo arcade system, a mainstay of pubs the length and breadth of the land.

OLD-SKOOL CONSOLES



Once upon a time, the public was impressed by the fact that a home gaming system existed *at all*. In the wake of the arcade explosion of the late '70s/early '80s came these primitive home systems, the first consoles ever. These days they look woefully basic – some of them use ASCII characters as sprites, for God's sake – but at the time they were the ultimate in cool, and prohibitively expensive to boot.

Atari 2600
• www.davesclassics.com/2600emu.html

OTHER SITES OF INTEREST

Kaptain Koin-Op
• www.virtual-pc.com/xeyed/kk/
Delightful archive of arcade game instruction manuals, cheats etc

JROK's Homepages
• www.jrok.com/
JROK is responsible for some of the finest 'clones' around, such as the wonderful PacMan-a-like *Pac PC*. You'll also find some charming pictures of his pet cat on his homepage. Ahhh

Moose's Emulation Valley
• www.rocknet.net.au/~moose/arcade_emulation.html

• http://boxotrix.it-ias.depaul.edu/~pcae/pcae20b.zip

Colecovision
• www.komkon.org/~dekogel/adamem.html

Intellivision
• www.davesclassics.com/intellivisionemu.html

Vectrex
• www.davesclassics.com/vectrex.html

NINTENDO

NES (Nintendo Entertainment System)
• http://nesticle.parodius.com/nestc040.zip
The charmingly titled *Nesticle* is an incredibly polished, frighteningly accurate emulator which mimics Nintendo's olde worlde 8-bit wonderbox. The system never really caught on over here, but in the US it was a sensation. Item of spod interest: the NES incarnation of *Elite* is considered by its creators to be the finest version available. So there.

Super NES
• www.euronet.nl/users/jkoot/



Ahhh, the Super NES. Now *there* was a system. Home to cracking versions of *StreetFighter II*, *Bomberman* and, of course, the superlative *Mario* titles, the SNES may not have sold as many units as the Megadrive, but it was always the connoisseur's choice. Even with today's ultra-sophisticated PCs, emulating it ain't simple. Now abandoned by its creators, *Snes 9X* is the bestest, fastest Super Nintendo impressionist money can't buy. Shame it's illegal.

GameBoy
• www.davesclassics.com/gameboyemu.html
By today's standards it's a basic machine, but Nintendo's fun-size joybox remains the benchmark for hand-held systems, its only real rivals being the sadly unreleased-in-Europe Nomad system (a portable Megadrive) and the brilliant GT (a hand-held version of the PC Engine). The available emulators are good, but no match for holding the real thing in your sweaty palms.

Nintendo 64
• http://projunreality.ml.org/
This is the home of Project Unreality, the world's first Nintendo 64 emulator. Don't get too excited though, it doesn't actually play any games yet. But they're working on it. Expect Nintendo's legal department to step in any day soon.

Nintendo's legal standpoint
Not surprisingly, Nintendo themselves take an extremely dim view of the on-line emulation scene. After all, much of it revolves around the systematic unofficial distribution of much of their back catalogue – and besides, the Ga[illegible]till sells in substantial numbers. Make no mistake. [illegible]ownload a Nintendo ROM is to break the law. For [illegible]re information straight from the horse's mouth, check out **www.nintendo.com/corp/faqs/legal.html**.

SEGA

Megadrive
• www.davesclassics.com/Sega/Genesis/gcyst032.zip



The Megadrive was the PlayStation of its day – a wildly popular console which even your grandmother had heard of (even if the old hag couldn't comprehend what the damn heck it actually *did*). It also had its own mascot in the guise of Sonic the Hedgehog, a blue, spiny arsebag who was crawling with fleas. The platform was inexplicably known in the US as the Sega Genesis, hence the jaw-droppingly accurate *Genecyst*, another snappily monikered emulator from Bloodlust, the lunatics responsible for *Nesticle*.

GameGear/Master System
• www.davesclassics.com/sms/m80f.zip
Sega's 8-bit offerings were more or less identical, the GameGear being a portable replica of the incredibly ugly Master System. Hardly renowned for an extensive catalogue of must-have classics, the platforms were relatively successful nevertheless. See for yourself what all the fuss wasn't about with the latest version of *Massage*.

PC Engine/Turbo Express
• http://joyce.eng.yale.edu/~bt/turbo/emu/



Unreleased in this country, the PC Engine was an absolutely glorious little device. Despite being a lowly 8-bit system, it was home to some of the finest, most psychotically frenetic shoot 'em ups the world has ever seen – not to mention the *definitive* version of Hudsonsoft's peerless *Bomberman*, and *Kato & Ken*, the world's only scatological platform game. *Magic Engine* is perhaps the finest example of emulation you could wish for – fast, furious and very, very slick.

Sony PlayStation
• http://szczecin.top.pl/~duddie/



Yes, you did read that correctly. *Psemu* is a work-in-progress PlayStation emulator. It may be far, far from perfect (there's no sound, FMV isn't supported, and almost every single game you try to run will glitch, crash or stubbornly refuse to 'go' at all), but it *is* interesting. Especially if you're a lawyer for Sony. You will, of course, need an official PlayStation CD to play – just pop it in the CD drive and you're off – not to mention official Sony PlayStation hardware ROMs, which are illegal to copy. How about an *official* PSX emulator, Sony?

FROM THE FRONT

OUR REGULAR PERSONAL REPORT FROM THE ON LINE GAMING FRONTIER

Up, up and on-line!



Ever since man first gazed forlornly into the sky and witnessed the majesty of the soaring eagle, he has wanted to harness the power of flight. Ever since Paul Presley discovered that setting fire to gunpowder makes things go bang, he's wanted to combine the two in a merciless arena of aerial death.

RECENTLY I WAS TASKED WITH SEEKING OUT the world of the on-line pilot and conquering it. "Make it bend to your iron will," said the editor. "Dominate them, dominate them all. And if they don't break, destroy them, for they are the unbelievers, the enemy of all that is pure. We'll pay you the usual word rate."

Where to start? Where else but on the phone, blagging as many free flight sims as possible from software houses. Fortunately I'd already been playing quite a bit of NovaLogic's *F-22 Raptor*, over an on-line network called NovaWorld. Admittedly I'd only installed the software because I'd once heard of a porn star called Nova, and was hoping there would be some kind of link. But in the three or four weeks that I'd had it on my PC, I'd been having quite a bit of fun. It's hardly the most in-depth of simulations, but it is highly playable on-line. NovaWorld offers a choice of deathmatches or team-based wars, and both are constantly buzzing with fellow pilots, all with silly names like 2nd Lt. DeathBringaa, Capt. Chooch and Prezzer.

NovaWorld is very insular though, very self-contained. And although it fulfilled my basic needs, the flight sim bug had bitten and wasn't going to let go until I'd fed it with more. *F-22 ADF*, from DID, was the biggest flight sim I'd played of late. Let's see what it could offer.

Big guns

Right away there was a problem. Just setting up a match in *ADF* was a tiresome affair. First I had to log on to DID's Pilot Chat area, post a message asking for opponents, and then constantly reload the page until there was a response. Not only that, but I also had to find out what my IP address was in order to set anything up. IP address? You might as well have asked me to develop a working peace process for Northern Ireland or enjoy the sport of curling. Luckily, DID are busily developing a full-scale, multi-vehicle electronic battlefield system, so somewhere in the future things will be easier. Or so they claim.

Virtual squadrons

My adventures in the digital skies weren't getting off to a flying start. I decided that rather than face the rest of the games in the pile beside my desk one by one (games such as *F/A-18 Korea*, *Joint Strike Fighter* and *Longbow 2*), I should try and find an easier way to set up games.

The Net is swarming with 'virtual squadrons' – groups of like-minded gamers who have banded together to find solace, kinship and people to kill on a regular basis. DID's website offers a few links to various squadrons (mostly flying *EF2000*, but a few *F-22*ers have started to appear).

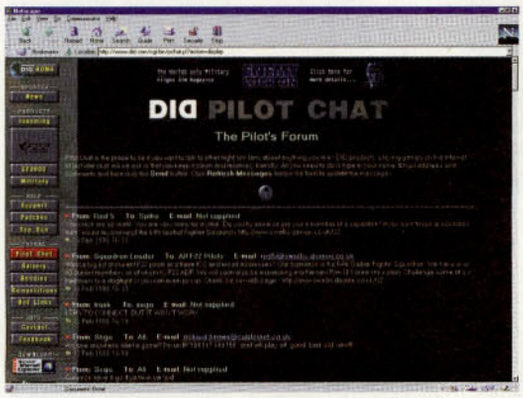
Two of the most notable (by which I mean two that actually returned my e-mails) are the 64th Global Fighter Squadron and the 103rd Flying Bulldogs, both running regular meetings using *F-22 ADF*, *F/A-18 Korea* and others. Although both squads have pretty decent websites, most of the co-ordination is done via ICQ, an application that seems to be de rigueur among on-line pilots and is well worth downloading.

The war of the future

It's still early days for on-line sims. Several companies (notably NovaLogic and DID) have begun to realise how big this area could be and have started catering for players, but there's still work to be done. More support needs to be given and more facilities for games to be organised – chat forums, bulletin boards and hang-outs. The next step is obviously the electronic battlefield, but until DID release any details we'll have to keep doing all the work ourselves.







Each game has its own unique way of setting things up. Visiting any of these sites will explain how to do it.

HOT LINKS

Sites of interest to the dedicated on-line pilot.

DID (home of *F-22 ADF*)
• www.did.com
Graphic Simulation (*F/A-18 Korea*)
• www.graphsim.com
NovaLogic (*F-22 Raptor* and NovaWorld)
• www.novalogic.com
Enemy Lock-On (subscription-only flight sim magazine)
• www.elo.com
Combat Simulations (dedicated flight sim site)
• www.combatsim.com/
64th Global Fighter Squadron
• www.swallis.demon.co.uk/f22/
103rd Flying Bulldogs
• www.mdmak.demon.co.uk/f22index.htm
ICQ (on-line chat and message application)
• www.mirabilis.com



The on-going saga of Ultima Online

– by Annette Beatwell –



Britannia at war



Jou'nar's forces assault a shrine and are repulsed by deadly force (and lots of flashy special effects).

For the last few months, *Ultima Online* players have been able to live out their lives relatively peacefully. But that's changing as we speak, for the land is rumbling with events of greater magnitude: the first real 'plots' have started.

New plots, new danger

Until now, most of the inhabitants of *Ultima Online* have had to console themselves with doing little else than hunting rabbits and robbing corpses to get their kicks. It's taken Origin a while to get their 'virtual world' to a stage where they're happy with it, and now they're coming in to join the party. A number of new Origin-controlled 'plots' are now kicking off throughout Britannia, which can only be good news for regular players. Those demanding some sort of 'proper' plot for *Ultima Online* should now be silenced. Everyone can now take part in the unfolding story, with each skirmish and quest adding to a truly epic battle of good versus evil. Here's a taster of what's happened so far...



While the defenders of Trinsic beat back the Zog Cabal, the murdered Hartham lies in state.

Undead plague the land

The whole of Britannia was recently placed in great peril by the activities of two evil liches – Kyrnia and Lathari. Outlawed for conducting "vile experiments" (involving human body parts – not, thankfully, cute bunny rabbits), the pair somehow returned to a remote tower somewhere on the south coast. The sage Humbolt discovered that the liches were constructing some kind of device that was "corrupting the flow of the ethereal current". Immediately an army of brave players was seen marching off to sort them out.

There they witnessed the full depths of the liches' nastiness. Calling forth her powers of necromancy, Kyrnia animated an army of undead heroes to attack the advancing forces of good, while she bombarded them with spells from the safety of the tower.

Despite the odds, the heroes fought their way to the liches' stronghold but were ultimately deprived of their prey. Displaying an unusual sense of savvy for a villain, Kyrnia hurled fireballs and insults before teleporting away, leaving the artefact with the heroes.



The troll attack on Vesper provides a good opportunity for posing and bravado.

Assassination in Trinsic

A group of orcs and human mages calling themselves The Zog Cabal recently staged an attack on the city of Trinsic. During the attack, an assassin slipped into the city and murdered Hartham, the Trainer of the Guard. The murderer then poisoned himself rather than be captured by the player heroes who arrived on the scene.

Later, at the wake arranged by the grieving citizens of Trinsic, a hooded stranger announced that Hartham's death was just the beginning of a campaign by the Zog Cabal to unseat both British and Blackthorn and bring chaos to Britannia. But the stranger disappeared before he could be questioned further.

Recently there have been several sightings of Hartham's restless ghost. The spirit claims that he cannot be at peace until his sword is retrieved and laid beside him. The sword is said to be in the possession of a Black Liche, though its exact location is currently unknown.

Equal rights for trolls

The city of Vesper was recently the target of an attack by trolls, who were desperately trying to reclaim their ancestral homes from the 'humies'. The unlucky trolls were soon sent fleeing back into the wilds, with taunts from the victors echoing in their ears.

Shrines attacked

The new Trainer of the Guard, CrawWorth, uncovered a number of misdemeanours committed by Juo'nar, the leader of the local paladins. As well as embezzlement, Juo'nar was also found to have abused his authority in other matters. The enraged citizens of Trinsic drove the disgraced paladin from town. He reappeared a few weeks later at the head of an army of ettins and orcs, and his forces made a surprise attack on Trinsic, apparently in an attempt to snatch a magical necklace for their leader's use.

Within the last few days, Juo'nar's forces launched a simultaneous attack on every shrine in Britannia. Though the attacks were repulsed, the heroes involved could not glean any information on the reasoning behind the attacks.

Essential Ultima Online sites

- www.owo.com
- www.owo.com/town/current_events/current_events.html
- http://ultima.scorched.com/
- www.origin.ea.com

On-Line News & Gossip

The page with its finger on the pulse of on-line gaming.

Raider Wars



INTERACTIVE MAGIC, FAMOUS FOR BEING ONE OF THE FIRST COMPANIES TO HIT the on-line gaming scene, recently put their new *Raider Wars* into open beta. It's a space combat simulation that gives wannabe pilots a crack at eight different ships and a plethora of mines, rockets, plasma torpedoes and other futuristic weaponry. While the game is in beta, play won't cost you a penny – great news for freeloaders. A pricing structure has yet to be announced, but according to a company spokesman, gamers will be eligible for five hours of free play whatever happens.

It's exclusive to Interactive Magic's service, so if you fancy a crack, point your browser at **www.imagiconline.com/.**

Wireplay starts to Quake (again)



Without doubt, Wireplay has become a fast and hugely attractive service.

AFTER A MONTH'S HARD TESTING, the crew at Wireplay have moved *Quake II* from open trial to its own channel. For the uninitiated, the joy of BT's games service is that it runs on an isolated network, and thus doesn't have to contend with the ups and downs of Internet connections. "Anyone who's played *Quake* with us will know all about the system's amazing performance," says Wireplay's own ÜberFragMeister, Adrian Manning. "But nothing will prepare them for the way that *Quake II* runs. We're achieving ping times of 100 milliseconds using standard 28.8 modems!"

In addition, Adrian and his team have hunted down the world's best *Quake II* levels and add-ons: Capture the Flag, Headhunters, Battle Of The Sexes and Team Fortress are all on their way soon. If you fancy joining the army of 37,000 registered Wireplayers, you need nothing more than the original game, the latest versions of Quakeworld and Qview and the Wireplay client, all available from **www.wireplay.com.**

www.cool_site_to_visit.com

http://www.oglibrary.com/ Online Gaming Library



Pug ugly, but it's personality that counts.

IT MAY LOOK MIGHTY PANTS, BUT DON'T LET THAT PUT YOU OFF. PUT simply, the Online Gaming Library is an essential bookmark. If you've ever fired up your dial-up and played network games over the Internet, check out OGL before you do anything else. It lists most if not all the gaming sites on the Internet, together with their associated costs, system requirements and even the odd screenshot. But it doesn't stop there. Take a gander at one page and it'll point you to others that may be of interest to you. It'll show you which games rock and which games are a crock; which games have turned up their toes and no longer exist; which networks are the ones to be seen on. There's even a jargon page, so when someone shouts, "I'm an implementor!" you'll know not to blow raspberries.

The various sections of the site form a bookcase down the left edge of the main screen, enabling you to jump straight to action games, RPGs, strategy games, sports games, puzzle games and many other areas. There's also a chat system and message board, giving the site a friendly atmosphere. While the navigation and graphics do feel on the crusty side, the wealth of information contained on the pages more than makes up for it.

Too many dots spoil the broth

THE INTERNET COUNCIL OF Registrars (CORE) recently announced plans to introduce seven new domain names by March this year – .firm, .info, .nom, .rec, .shop, .web and .arts. However, not only is it unclear as to who has the power to make these domains live, but Network Solutions, current holders of the government contract to register, administer and charge for top-level domains, also contest ownership of them.

Adding to the confusion, CORE's chairman has stated that only the Internet Assigned Numbers Authority has jurisdiction over domain names. To cap it all, Network Solutions' contract expires in September, and the National Science Foundation has asked them not to make changes to the domain name system in the interim.

While many have requested a new, separate body to handle domains, the US government is worried that allowing anyone to add domains could throw the commercial Internet into a state of chaos.

More information at **www.gtld-mou.org.**

Microsoft full of bugs – official



Let's hope the real thing looks a little less pants.

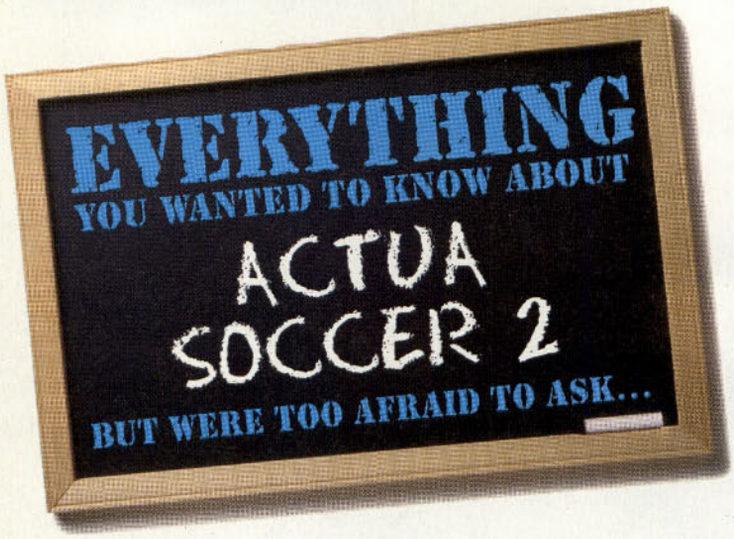
SOON TO ARRIVE AT MICROSOFT'S INTERNET GAMING ZONE IS *OUTWARS*, A 3D blastfest with a plot lifted straight from *Starship Troopers*. In essence, insectoid vermin from the Hydra constellation are running amok and biting the heads off decent Americans. It's your job to dust down the industrial bug gun and splat them dead. God bless Uncle Sam, and may the Force be with you.

Outwars players are able to swim, jump, jetpack and fly planes around the game's diverse 3D world. According to Microsoft, the strategy element is just as important as the action; although this is something that remains to be seen. The game is as smooth as a non-stick saucepan on the platform it was designed for, so if you've got a Pentium II, MMX, AGP and a rack of force-feedback game peripherals, we all hate you.

The *Outwars* homepage is at **www.microsoft.com/games/outwars**, and Microsoft's Internet Gaming Zone is at **www.microsoft.com/uk/gameszone.**

actual screenshots


Hurtling through the skies at twice the speed of sound, you drop to three hundred feet above enemy territory. Speed is life. The slightest error, death. Your body's shaking, guts pulling apart. Concentrate. Strap yourself into the fastest, most destructive force in the US arsenal.
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Is your performance on the virtual soccer pitch more Barnsley than Man Utd? Is your defensive record more akin to Spurs than Arsenal? Are you more like Andy Cole or Andi Peters in front of goal? Martin Bramall and Jeremy Wells welcome you to the *PC Zone* school of *Actua Soccer 2* excellence.

THE GREAT THING ABOUT *Actua Soccer 2* is that it's fast, easy to control and easy to learn. When you first start playing it may seem very hard to score and you'll get thrashed – this is because you don't know how the computer AI works. The first thing to remember is that the AI isn't perfect, but you've got to learn to live with it and play within it to succeed. At times the auto-player select will frustrate you as control switches from player to player while the AI tries to keep up with the pace of the game. Live with it, and if possible learn to exploit it by playing through-balls when you're playing against human opposition. The PSX version of the game had a useful feature that enabled you to keep control of a player (by simply holding the right shoulder button). Sadly this innovative feature was left out of the PC version, but Gremlin have promised us that the next version of the game will include such a feature.



As with most footie games, the AI is not without its problems.

The bends

When you first start playing, we suggest you stick to the 'Amateur' or 'Semi-professional' skill. While you won't be able to bend the ball as much when shooting, the AI in other areas is more helpful in that the ball will stick to players' feet more easily, enabling you to twist and turn and beat defenders, and your passing will generally be more accurate. It goes without saying that if you're not having much success with England or Lithuania, try switching to Brazil or Germany and playing friendlies against Luxembourg or Saudi Arabia to improve your basic ball skills and confidence. If you're leaking goals like Barnsley, try playing with a more defensive formation (see Formations panel, next page). We also suggest man-to-man marking instead of zonal, and recommend you play a passing game that enables you to build up your attack from the back. Once you're more adept on the ball, switch to 'Professional' or 'International' level.



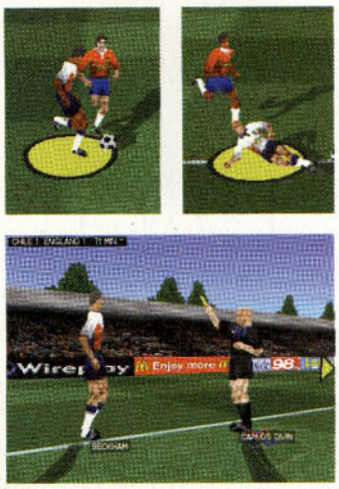
We got best results with 4-4-2, man-to-man marking and playing a passing game.

Defending

Defending is an art. And here's how to become the Jackson Pollock of the *Actua Soccer* world.

There are two ways to perform a tackle in *Actua Soccer 2*. The first is to run into the player with the ball and try and 'barge' him off it. You don't need to press a particular button, but you should try and make sure you're ready if and when the ball breaks loose. Use your pace (by tapping the speed-burst button) to try and shepherd the attacker into an area of the pitch that isn't so dangerous, so that if you do give a free kick away it won't allow the opposition a shot at goal.

The other way to stop a player bearing down on your keeper is the 'sliding tackle' – the term implying a slightly reckless lunge, not the result of naked bobsleighing. This kind of challenge is best taken as a last resort or only when supremely confident that you can come away cleanly with the ball. More often than not, especially if you're new to the game, in the box or just plain clumsy, the end result will be a free kick, a possible booking or even a sending off – you have been warned.



A shoulder barge (top left) rather than a slidng tackle (right) might be the better option in the area.

Scoring

The range of shots available in *Actua Soccer 2* is vast, but the nature of the game dictates that longer-range shots are more likely to fly in than tap ins from within the box, due to the cat-like ability of the keepers. Experience suggests that a pile driver from just outside the area, preferably at an angle and with a bit of after-touch, will find the back of the net. Keep your eye on the power bar to get maximum power to your shots. You may even want to try holding the shoot button down until you manage to pull defenders out of position before letting off a shot. Remember that your chance of success will be much higher if you can have a quick look and then angle your shot accordingly. For example, if you switch the attack across the pitch very quickly and the keeper is still at the far side of the net, a low shot right in the corner should be enough to beat him.

Alternatively, try pegging it down the wing and putting a high ball into the box. To trigger a first-time shot, volley, overhead kick, diving header etc, get your player into position and hammer away on the shoot button while the ball is in the air. This method of attack isn't as fail-safe as it was in the original version of the game, but you will enjoy some success with it if you persevere (it also looks good).

When you get through on goal, always try to check the keeper's position, as they're very good at narrowing the angle and seem to have elastic arms. Consequently it's very difficult to score from close range, so if you're getting too near the goal, turn back and try a shot from further out. If your path is blocked, try shooting at an angle across the face of the goal and using after-touch to bend it into the net.



A shot with plenty of power from just outside the area will often find the back of the net (top). Alternatively, try putting in crosses – but don't get too close.

Play(er) maker



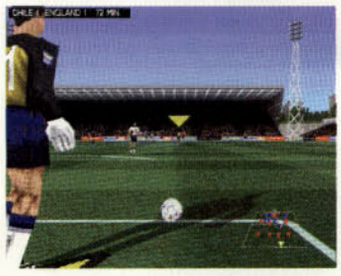
You may want to design your very own über-team to take on the world. In which case consider these factors when designing a team: only spend points on 16 players, since there are no suspensions and you only ever need 11+ five subs. Concentrate on speed, handling and shooting when assigning players' points. It also pays to 'spend' a lot on your keeper.

Alternatively, put all your eggs in one basket and create a superhuman striker, switch to long-ball tactics and play him up front as the ultimate target man. Much more effective than Emile Heskey, and more fun than supporting Leicester.

Chip shots (executed by pressing the shoot button and rocking back on the pass button simultaneously) rarely get past the keeper, so don't even bother. However, if you manage a quick break it is possible to score with a long pass (lob) from just over the halfway line – especially if Seaman is in goal.

Passing

Opportunities are created and goals scored by pulling opposition players out of position. Create chances for your team by keeping possession and passing the ball around in midfield. Switch play from wing to wing using the long pass, and use one-twos (by double-tapping the pass button) to create space. The speed burst is useful to beat defenders when you have the ball, though be sure not to change direction once you've knocked it into space or you'll lose possession. Also, use the speed burst sparingly as it affects the players' performance, especially when shooting.



Playing the ball over the midfield often gets results.

The through ball should be used sparingly – there are no perfect positions from which to try it, but some players will have more success than others. The best time to try it is when attempting to pass the ball up the pitch rather than sideways or behind.

Always try to vary your tactics and change your formation accordingly to keep your opponent guessing. If you're playing 5-3-2, try to bring it up from the back using your wing-backs. If you're playing 4-4-2, try hoofing it up into midfield and using your midfielders to run onto the ball. If you use the speed burst correctly you should be able to get into a shooting position before your opposing defenders know what's going on or execute a slick one-two with one of your forwards. It's not pretty, but it often works. To combat fatigue, bring on fresh legs in the second half.

Remember to play players in their positions and pass the ball rather than run with it. If you use a defender to charge up the pitch with the ball and let off a shot, you'll be left short at the back and open to counter-attack. Also consider that defenders aren't usually very good at shooting (check their stats), so work on passing the ball from defence to midfield to your front men to increase your chances of scoring.

Free kicks and set pieces

When you get a free kick, the view will change to that from the dead ball camera, enabling you to see exactly what's going on upfield. By moving up and down once you've highlighted a player, your players should start trying to run into space.

If you're close enough to goal you'll be able to have a crack – highlight the player nearest the part of the net you want to aim for, and then use the direction keys to bend the ball towards the net. You'll have more success on 'International' setting, as this enables players to bend the ball more than on 'Amateur'. Remember to let the power bar increase dependent on how close you are to goal – full power from Shearer on the edge of the box and the ball will probably end up in row Z.

It's very difficult to score from corners, but you can create chances in the box. Try highlighting a player and moving up and down, and your players will start to run around trying to find some space. A decent cross followed by the hammering of the shoot button will lead to your player trying a first-time move – header, volley etc.

As far as penalties are concerned it's a bit of a lottery. The keepers in penalties are all computer-controlled, and no amount of key-pressing will change that. Again, the amount of swerve and bend you can get on the ball will depend on which setting you're playing at and which player is taking the kick. Also, you may need to watch the power bar – you don't need to blast it every time. Try hitting a shot as softly as possible, as this often fools the keeper. If all else fails, try banging it in full-power, dead straight, and watch the keeper dive out of the way. You won't score all of the time, but then who does?







It's very hard to score from corners and free kicks, but penalties are another matter.

Formations

4-4-2 The standard English formation – solid as a rock. The defence play in a line and hold firm until opposing forwards are almost upon them. This formation will also give you a decent presence in midfield, enabling you to spring into attack like a startled gazelle. Think Arsenal on a good day.



4-3-3 Forward-thinking and quite adventurous – it could leave you a little vulnerable if the opposition starts trying to play through-balls in the centre of the park. However, the extra player up front will offer you more attacking options, and if faced by five at the back or a sweeper system you may find that two forwards just aren't enough. It works for Wimbledon. Sometimes.



4-5-1 Again, a more defensive formation than the first two. This should help you keep opposition strikers in check as well as ensuring a strong presence in midfield. The only drawback is that you're left with a solitary player up front. The biggest consideration here is whether your striker is up to it. He's not going to get a lot of support, so if it's a custom team you'll need to ensure your striker has a lot of pace and excellent finishing. Make him pretty big as well, then he can shrug off any challenges. If you're not opposed to playing a long-ball game then this formation is worth considering – quick ball over the top to a Ronaldo-style forward and the job's a good 'un. However, if your striker's more Robert Rosario than Alan Shearer then you're probably wasting your time. Latterly, Spurs played this formation under Gerry Francis. Need we say more?



5-3-2 This cautious set-up should be a big consideration when faced by technically superior opposition. For example, if you're playing Brazil, whose forward line is among the best – if not *the* best – in the world, five at the back should help give you a platform from which to build attacks and should also help in controlling a couple of star strikers. Superstar attackers or vastly experienced *Soccer 2* players will rip the heart out of an inexperienced player with just four at the back. The extra man gives you a little longer to see attacks building. Er... think Aston Villa. Or maybe Chelsea?



TROUBLESHOOTER!

Oddworld: Abe's Oddysee

Part 1 - Walk this way: from Rupture Farms to Scrabania Temple

You need many things to get through *Abe's Oddysee*: the patience of a saint, a full set of expletives and the guiding hand of Richie Shoemaker.



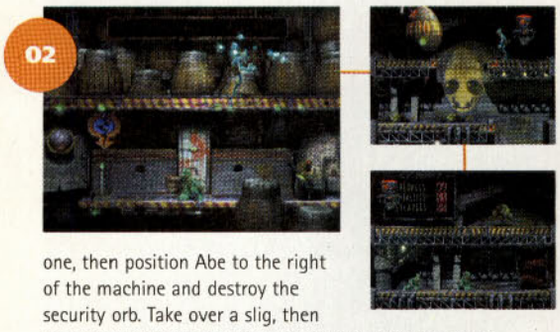




Rupture Farms

01 From the starting screen, go down from behind the barrels and you'll find yourself in the first set of secret rooms. Leap over the security doors and pull the left-hand lever. Go down. Jump over to the right-hand platform where the slig was sleeping – but don't hoist yourself up until it's fallen down to the bottom level. Kill the slig, chant to activate the portal, and save the mudokon. Go back up and get the two mudokons to follow you down to safety. You'll have to be careful – tell them to 'wait' to stop them from killing themselves. You can get them to jump off ledges by asking them to follow you a second time.

02 Take over the slig and use it to pull the lever, go right and kill the other slig. Explode. Go back, and from behind the barrel go down. Leap over to the grenade machine, collect



one, then position Abe to the right of the machine and destroy the security orb. Take over a slig, then the other, and go right. Shoot the slig quickly and then explode. Go back and get another grenade to destroy the security orb. You can now save the two mudokons.

03 You will need more grenades to destroy the three bombs in order to go down. Go straight down again and pull the switch,



then hoist yourself back up to the two mudokons. Get them to follow you down so you can save them. If you say 'follow me' twice and leap, they should jump from the ledges. Tell them to wait, to save them from the meat saw.

04 Pull on the rope to open the trap, then run to fall through. Take a grenade, face the right wall and throw the grenade to kill the slig. Get another grenade and go down. Destroy the bomb by crouching on the far right and throwing while facing left. Save the mudokon. Go up, chant, leap through the portal.





General hints

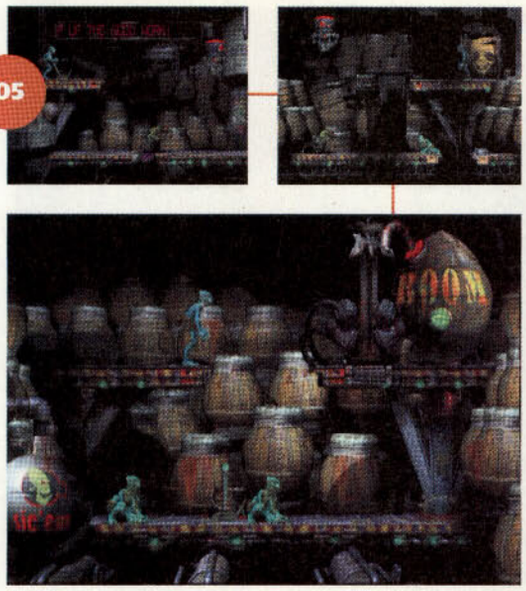
Even though the PSX-style save game feature is a bit crap, it is possible to keep the frustration factor down by finding and going back to savegame areas (denoted by a yellow diamond). You should also read all the clues you find, chant just for the hell of it, and touch the stones – you'll pick up loads of hints this way. Finally, get used to running, hanging by your fingernails, tricking your enemies into blowing themselves up, and coming across...

SLIGS These don't mess about if you're in their line of fire. Use the shadows to avoid them, and sneak behind them if they're facing away from you. Also, remember that rolling is generally quicker than running, but if you need to leap up quickly it may be better to peg it.

SCRABS They don't like chanting, but the only way to avoid them is to run very quickly. To get past them, wait until they're below you and then run and leap onto the next available platform. Thankfully these dudes can't climb, and they don't get on with each other either.

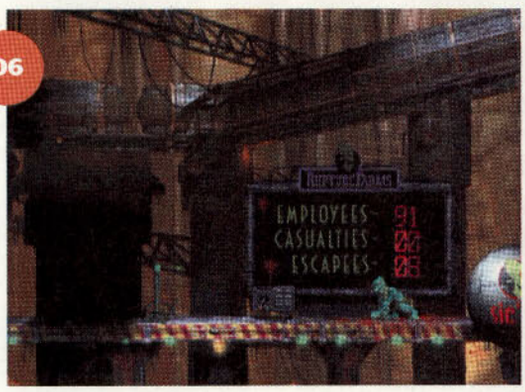
SLOGS These slavering beasties are short-sighted, so just creep onto the screen. When you're ready to run, give them a smell of your most potent chuff, just to grab their attention, and run like the wind.

BOMBS AND MINES Wherever you see a rock sack, it means bombs are up ahead. Just touch the sack, pick up the rocks that fall out and chuck 'em at anything that's likely to blow your legs off.

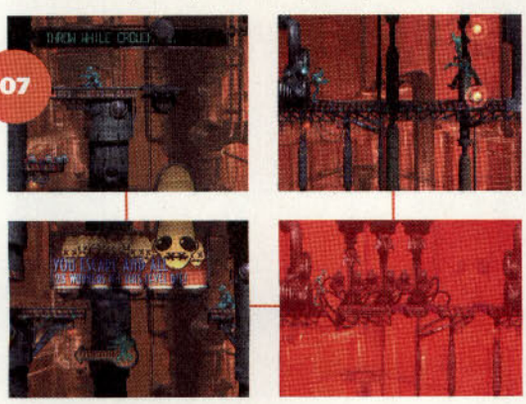


05 After dumping the slig through the trapdoor, get Abe to fall through as well. Use the shadows to creep down to the next screen. Get a grenade, then leap over to the left platform and throw it over to destroy the orb. Take over the slig and use it to pull the lever and detonate the bomb. Go up and back down to bring back the portal, then save the mudokons. Get another grenade, creep up into the shadows and destroy the slig. Chant and leap into the portal.

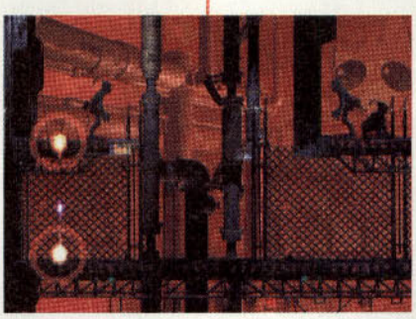
06 Get the two mudokons (there's one in the shadows) to follow you left so you can lull the slig to the right and into the lever trap. Once disposed with you can begin the lengthy process of getting all the mudokons through a portal.



07 Crouch in the centre of the platform and throw the grenade across to destroy the bombs. Go and get another grenade and come back, crouch in the same place and throw the grenade to the right to kill the sleeping slig. Walk off the lift to the right. Jump across carefully when all three saws are at the top. Chant the three mudokons to safety in the next room, then on your way back hoist your way down from the







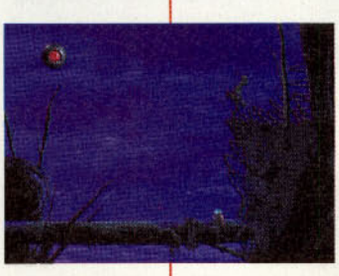
left side of the open flap on the right side of the screen. You'll drop down, and you can just pull the lever on the left screen to call down the lift. Now it's off to the stock yards.

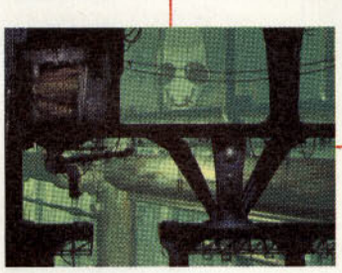
The stock yards

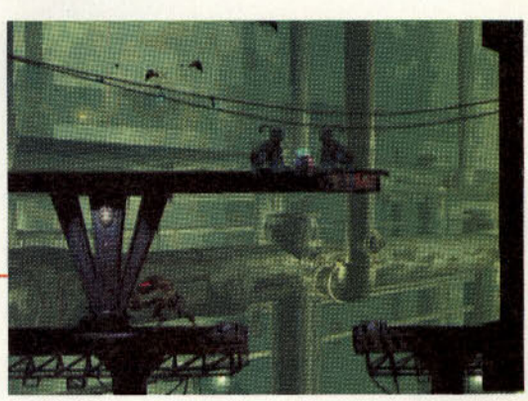
08 On the third screen from the start is a door on the bottom-right of the screen. Go through to access the distant platform. Now go left to summon the portal. Jump through. Summon another portal. Get one of the mudokons in the top-right to follow you, then creep right until the scrab chases you, then run back left and jump up to the platform. When the scrab is underneath, run right. You'll have to make three running jumps to get to safety – the scrab chasing you all the way. Open the portal for the mudokon, then go back and repeat the whole thing again for the other mudokon. Once you've saved both, run back and jump through the portal.

09 Prime the bomb (crouch next to it and press 'action'), then go left a bit and chant for a secret portal. Go through. Leap right and dangle until the slig on the lower level moves off-screen. Hoist up and run to the right. Keep running and leap to the right-hand platform, and dangle until the slig wanders off-screen again. When the coast is clear, hoist up to the top, clear the mudokons from the bomb and prime it. Hide and wait for the slig to return and blow itself up, then summon the portal and herd the mudokons to safety. Leave the way you came. Oh, and that bomb you primed: get one of the sligs from the left to follow you – run right and leap up to the platform so it will detonate the bomb. Go back and sneak behind the other slig until you can hoist yourself up to get to the next screen.

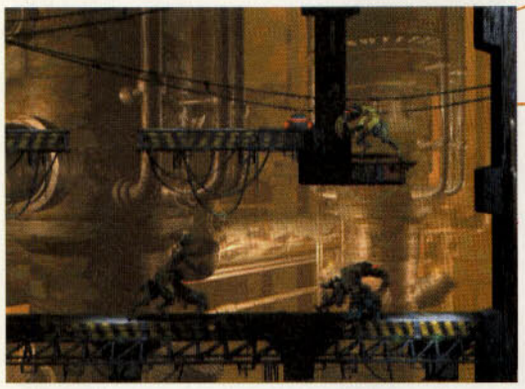
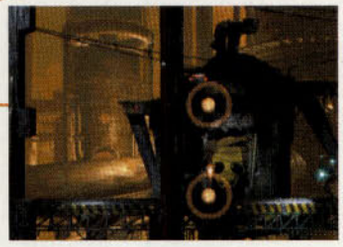




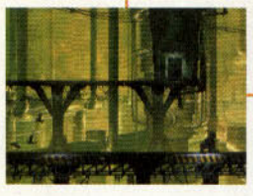
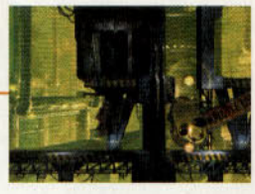






◀ 10 Wait for the slig to exit right, then run after it and quickly get up to the platform, activate the portal and go through. Take over the slig, go right and down to kill the two sligs. Explode, then get all the mudokons to the portal. Exit via the portal.

11 Run quickly and hoist yourself up to the platform. Save the mudokon then open the portal. Go back through the door then run back through the portal you just opened – this will take you back to a previous screen where you'll have to deal with the couple of slogs by getting them to run into mines.









Monsaic lines

Relax, this part is a cinch. Your biggest problem will be befriending the native mudokons by whistling and farting – by the way, '6' and '8' refer to the key-press for whistling. Remember that levers activate wells, and you can escape bees by hiding behind the chanting mudokons.

12 Mimic the native mudokon: whistle '6' twice then fart nicely.

13 Mimic: whistle '6' twice, '8' twice, then fart loudly.

14 Mimic: whistle '668868' then fart.

15 Mimic: whistle '66886868' then trump a good 'un.

16 Pull the lever on the screen to the right, and go jump in the well to Scrabania.

Scrabania

17 Kill the slig by hanging under the platform and sneakily darting up and priming the bomb and rolling off before he sees you. Head off to the left. Hide in the shadows until the slig goes off-screen, then jump up and pull the lever to release a boulder upon its return. Pull the lever from the left to activate the well. Jump through it and pull the lever behind. Now jump through the well. Possess the slig and walk it slowly to the right to detonate the mine. Jump into the well – you should now be able to summon the elum by yanking the bell. Having summoned the elum, ride it to leap across the chasm.

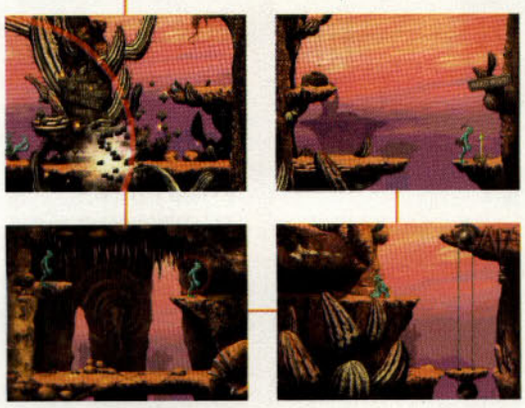


18 Mimic the mudokon (say 'hello', whistle '868' and fart – you'll receive a new power). Tell the elum to wait and then go right. Chant to destroy the mine. Pull the lever above, mimic the mudokon again and take the lift down. Chant to destroy the bombs then touch the stone and go back and mimic again. Then go down. Say 'hello' to mudokon, then whistle '668' and fart. When the mines drift right, chant to destroy them, and then go up. Get the elum and come back down and leap across to the right. You'll need to acquire more of your new powers to destroy the bombs and continue. When you do, climb on the elum and just run!



19 With the elum tucking into the honey, go over to the right-hand lift and go down. Pull the lever on the third screen to the right and jump into the well on the left. Now you can pick up stones to destroy the mine. Mimic the mudokon ('hello', '6886' and fart). Destroy the bomb. Pull the lever and, without falling, make your way to the elum. The bees will stop it licking the honey and you'll be able to jump the chasm further on.

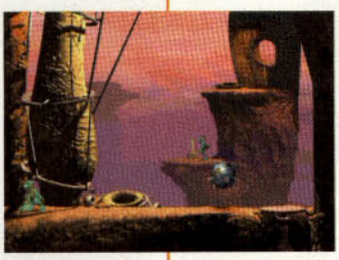
















20 Tell the elum to wait, jump through the well to switch off the bomb, go right and jump in the well – but detonate the mine at the same time. Leap on the elum, jump the canyon and run on through to the well. Jump in. Leap over to the left lift to get a rock, then take the right lift down to pick it up. Throw the rock over to destroy the bomb. Go up, take the left lift down and touch the rock. Go back round, get the elum and go to the mudokon. Say 'hello', whistle '8688' then fart.



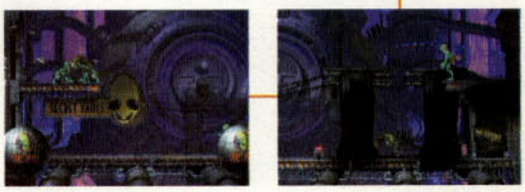


21 Sneak past the slig and jump over the bombs. Mimic: 'hello', '86886' then fart. Go left and destroy the bombs. Pull the lever, jump into the well and take over the slig. Go left and kill the slig. Get the elum and jump the chasm.
22 Jump into the well and, while avoiding the mine, mimic: 'hello', '866' and fart. Jump into the well. Mimic: 'hello', whistle '868868' then fart. Chant to destroy the mines. Be careful at the end there.

Scrabania Temple

23 From the start, roll left to summon a portal to a secret area. Take over the slig and kill it on the bomb. Quickly go left/right to create the portal. Then go back left and run right to catch the upper platform. Kill the other slig, sneak right then left and save the two mudokons. Exit.



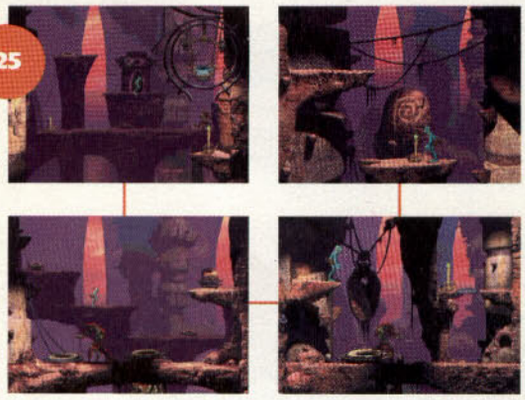




24

24 Make your way down to the bottom right-hand screen and touch the stone. Now go up and chant and then pull the lever. Go up again and out the exit.

25 Pull the lever on the left, then jump into the well on the right. Now hoist up to the platform on the bottom-left screen and fall into the well. Hoist up, pull the lever, go down, and when the slig is over to the left pull the lever and get into the well on the right-hand screen. Pull the lever, hoist down and run left and into the well again – this time from the ground. Hoist up, chant and exit.



25

26 On the first screen, hoist down and roll right when the bomb is out of the way. Further on, take over the slig and pull the lever. They'll be loads of slogs after your blood, shoot them and the rest is easy.

27 From the first screen, go left and touch the stone, then run right. Further on you'll have to use the lift to avoid the slig.



26

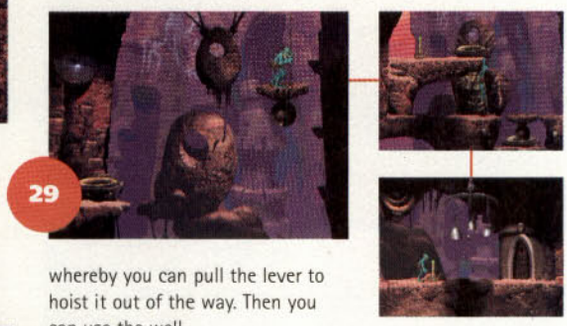
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28

28 You shouldn't really need help with this level – it's an absolute doddle.

29 You should be getting the hang of it all by now. The difficulty on this one is getting the slig onto the lift,



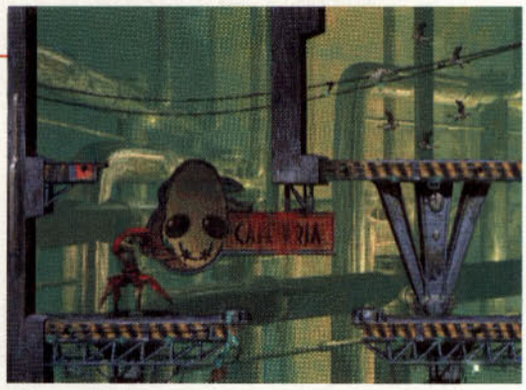
29

whereby you can pull the lever to hoist it out of the way. Then you can use the well.

30 Fairly simple if you use tricks from the previous area. The rooms through the portal are the most difficult. Hang on to the platform so that the slig falls through. If you fail to kill the slig it would probably be easier to start again.

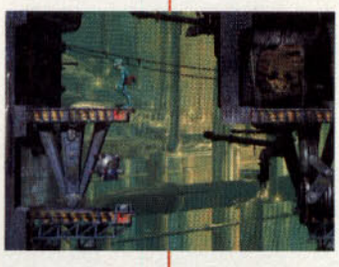


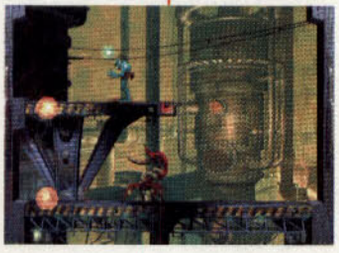
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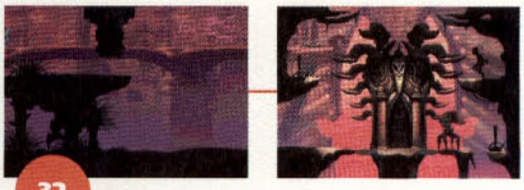




31 Lots of running back and forth in this one, as well as getting sligs to kill each other. If you roll left from the room which has the flint lock, you'll find the hidden areas. Get a mudokon to follow you left, say 'wait', then go right. Drop down and roll left. Make your way to the stock yard and chant to save the mudokon, then go down, chant and exit.

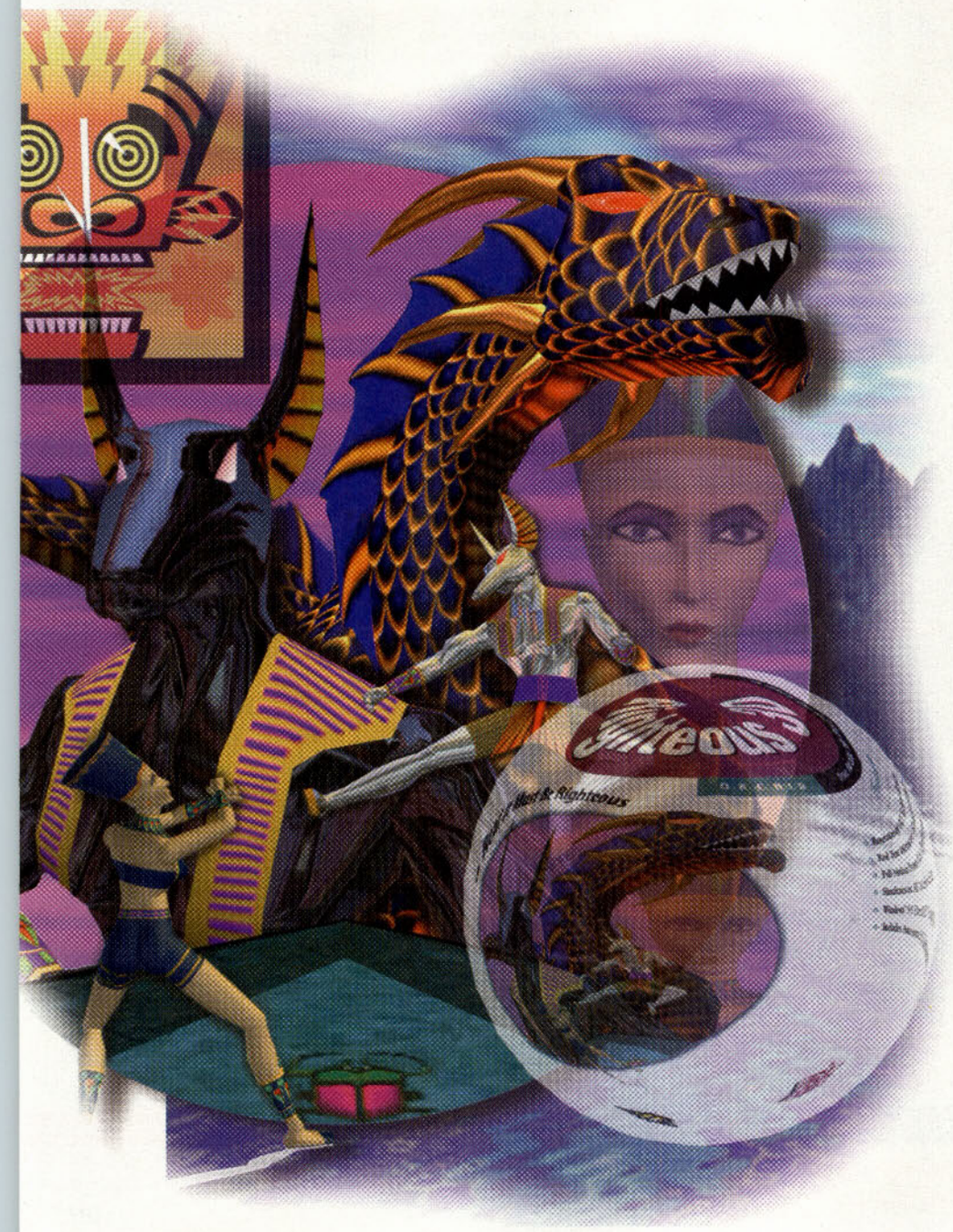
32 The run to the exit is pretty tricky, especially the final leg. Jump into the well on the first screen to scout out the screens. Near the end you'll have to crouch and roll (press X while running) to get through to the final screen. Jump onto the ledge, then leap and pull the lever. When the slig is dead, jump over to the lever, pull it and exit.

You'll eventually find yourself back at Monsaic lines. Stroll on and jump through to Paramonia. See you next month...



32

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233MMX	£1068	£1255	incl. VAT	£45.02



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WHAT PC, **Best Buy** *(dan Home Plus/233), Oct'97*

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Personal Computer World Editors Choice

"We judged the PCs in this month's group test on three main criteria: performance, price and internet readiness...There is usually quite a bit of hand-wringing over our Editor's Choice award, but not this month. Sheer value for money, performance and a no-strings internet access trial means that this month's winner just had to be the Dan Xplora Plus/166XT. It is well built, well specified and is one of the few machines to be truly internet ready. Superb."
PCW, Editor's Choice dan Xplora Plus/166XT, Sept'97

PC PRO SERVICE

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1997 Service Award

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included as standard in dan Home Plus PC

(Requires ATI Video Card with AMC connector)

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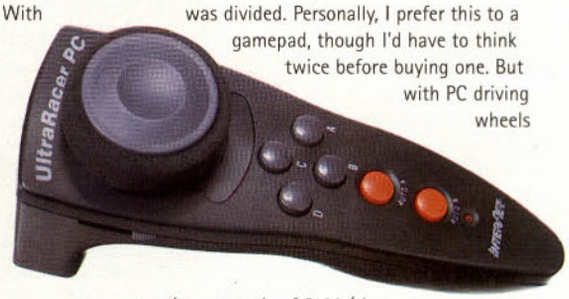
The next generation of 3D graphics cards has arrived and, sure enough, 3Dfx have lived up to their previous claims that they would deliver a card three times as powerful as their first one. Voodoo 2 provides a significant increase in frame rate for games like *Quake II*, *Forsaken* and *Incoming* (we've tested it). But unfortunately that's about all it does. There's no visual difference between Voodoo 1 and Voodoo 2, so existing 3Dfx owners who upgrade are bound to be somewhat disappointed with what they get. This will change later in the year, when games start to arrive that use the increased amount of texture memory and take advantage of the speed increase to use more detailed polygons, but early adopters will be unimpressed. We'll be looking at the new Voodoo 2 cards in more detail next month, but at this stage it looks as though the card that comes with the best software bundle (or the least expensive one) will be the card of choice for gamers eager to upgrade their system with Voodoo 2. Orchid, Diamond and Creative Labs all currently have Voodoo 2 cards in production, so you can expect a price war to start pretty much straight away. We'll also be checking out the first cards that use the PowerVR 2 chipset to see how to see how they compare, though the fact they depend heavily on DirectX 6 does not bode well. Watch this space...

Chris Anderson



UltraRacer 3D

SIZE ISN'T EVERYTHING, ALTHOUGH (as most girls will admit) it can make up for a lot. With this in mind, the latest driving wheel for your PC sure has a lot of making up to do in the 'it's what you do with it that counts' department, because the actual steering wheel part is 'fun-size'.



The UltraRacer looks like a cross between your average TV remote and an old '80s paddle device. Compared to a 'proper' wheel it's a bit laughable, but the build quality is high and the wheel itself has just the right amount of resistance to feel vaguely realistic. It does sit nicely in the hands, though the buttons are a little too close to the wheel for my liking.

The main problem with the UltraRacer is that for serious driving fans who demand realism, it doesn't quite deliver the goods, and for those more into arcade-oriented games, a decent gamepad serves just as well. Opinion around the office was divided. Personally, I prefer this to a gamepad, though I'd have to think twice before buying one. But with PC driving wheels costing upwards of £100 (the decent ones, anyway), it comes as a pleasant surprise to see a cut-priced alternative.

Richie Shoemaker

Manufacturer: Interact Multimedia
Price: £29.99
Tel: 01204 862026

75

Expensive hat



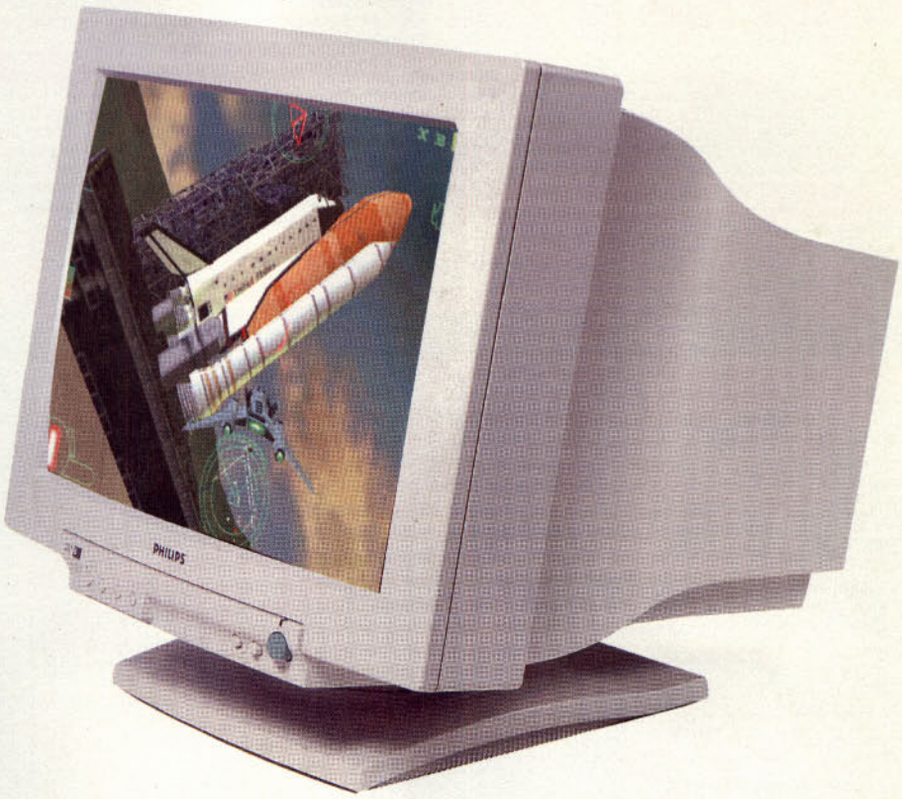
DON'T GET TOO EXCITED, BUT ANOTHER ONE of those fancy virtual reality things is coming your way very soon. The UR Gear is a "head-activated 3D joystick and PC controller, a hands-free mouse, and a stereo headphone with integrated microphone". That's what the press release says, anyway. Find out what *we* say when we review it next month. We've got to admit though, the integrated microphone has its possibilities: no more typing in juvenile insults to your mates over the network or, indeed, on the Net. Cue much screaming into a microphone: "You degenerate men-drinker" etc when you get fragged for the tenth time at *Quake II*. Interested parties who can't wait until next month to hear more about this promising abuseotron can ring 01342 323525 for more information.

Intel try again

HAVING FAILED TO MAKE A SIGNIFICANT DENT in the games market with their MMX chip, Intel are now producing their own 3D chip. The i740 will be installed on all their motherboards, immediately giving Intel an estimated 20 per cent share of the 3D market. The i740 can allegedly hold its own against the current crop of 3D accelerators, although how it will compare to Voodoo 2 and PowerVR 2 is anybody's guess. Tune in next month for the full specs on the new chip.

Bigger is better

ARE YOU GREEN WITH ENVY WHEN YOU see your console-owning peers playing their games on huge TV sets while you have to make do with a 15-inch monitor? Well, we may have the answer to all your problems. In the last couple of months we've been reviewing games on a Philips 21-inch monitor, and the difference it makes is quite dramatic. Split-screen games suddenly become a viable proposition, and accelerated games like *Quake II* take on a whole new dimension. The model we used was the Philips 201, which is: a) big, and b) capable of displaying crystal-clear images even in true colour at images of up to 1600x1200. However, there are a couple of things you may want to take into consideration before deciding to rush out and buy one: you're going to need a lot of desk space for a start, and secondly they're not cheap. The 201 is £1879, which is enough to scare off all but the most dedicated of games players. But if you're feeling a bit flush you can phone 0171 222 0833 for more info. Incidentally, before you start cursing us for having all the luck, we've had to give ours back (damn!).



Top wheel alert

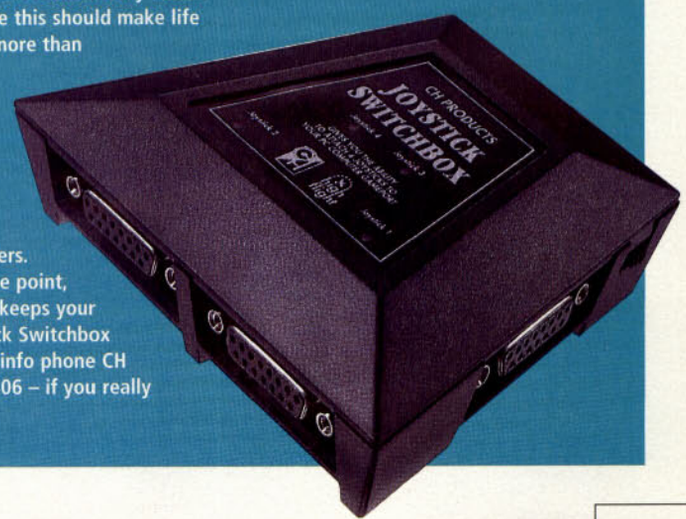
DRIVING WHEELS FOR THE PC – WHO BUYS THESE things? Not our freelancers, that's for sure. But then they're all a bunch of skinflints, so that doesn't tell us much. But we're reliably informed (by, er, PC driving wheel manufacturers) that these wheels are incredibly popular. So lots of you will be pleased to hear that we've just found another one. The Top Gear, from Logic 3, retails at a piffling £59.99 (very cheap as these things go) and has auto-centring, a leather-type cover, full compatibility with the *ThrustMaster Formula T2*, and lots and lots of buttons to make you feel as though you've bought something very modern and hi-tech. A review sample is winging its way to us as we speak, and we'll be checking it out next issue because we're genuinely interested, and not just because we want to spend all day playing driving games. For more info, call Spectra Video on 0181 902 2211.



Praise the Lord

A FEW ISSUES BACK, WE REVIEWED A FUNKY LITTLE ACCESSORY FROM ALPHA PRODUCTS which enabled you to plug multiple joysticks/gamepads/driving wheels etc into the same device. The manufacturers claimed they had your best interests at heart when they designed this wonderful device: "No longer will you bump your head on your desk while clambering around removing one joystick and plugging in another," they claimed with heartfelt sincerity. That'll be a 'head protection kit' then, which of course is a very good thing. Well, joy of joys, we've just found another one. The aptly named Joystick Switchbox, from CH products, supports up to four game devices. And it has a lot in common with Alpha's product: it's a switchbox, it's black, and it looks utterly awful.

In theory, a device like this should make life easier for gamers with more than one gaming device. In practice it's a complete pain in the arse, as you have to change drivers for each device in control panels every time you want to change controllers. Which sort of defeats the point, really. Still, I suppose it keeps your desktop tidy. The Joystick Switchbox retails at £20. For more info phone CH products on 01844 345406 – if you really want to.



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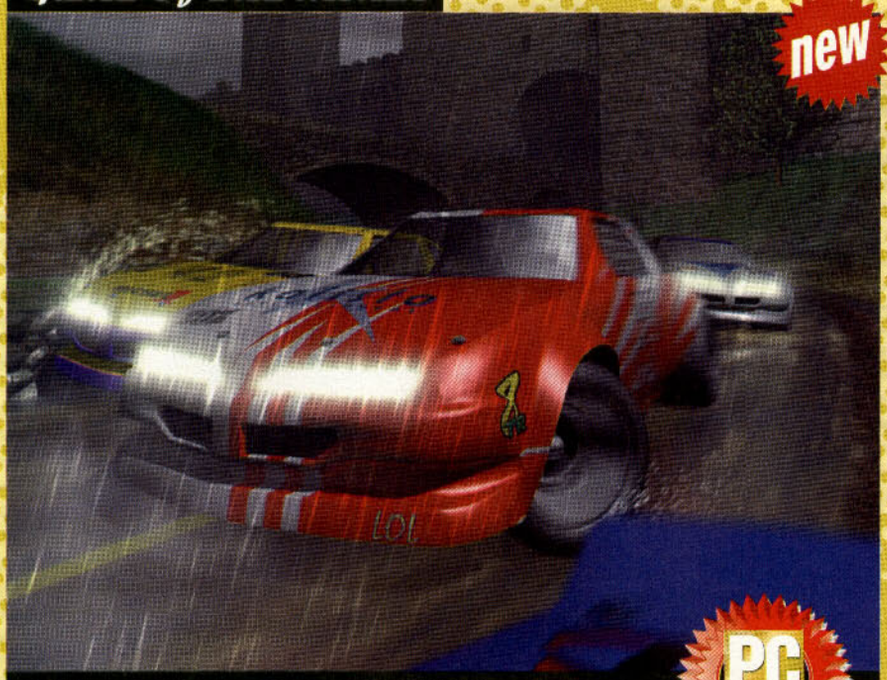
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Game Of The Month



Ultimate Race Pro – SCORE 83
"Slick ,adrenaline-charged racing with a killer deathmatch mode"

PC ZONE Recommended



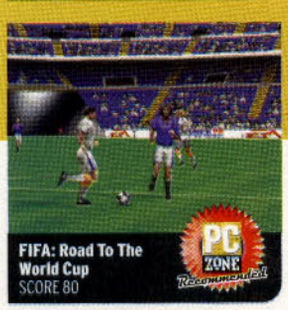


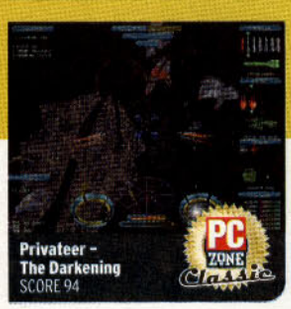














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PC ZONE

Recommends

Welcome to the *PC Zone* Recommended section. Here you'll find the cream of the games we've painstakingly reviewed and picked out over the years, plus those we feel should go down in PC gaming history as all-time Classics.

WELCOME TO THE PC ZONE RECOMMENDS section. It is here that you will find, what are, in our considered opinion, the very best games ever released for the PC.

In an effort to keep it simple, we've spilt it up into genres: Action games, Sports simulations, Adventure games, Flight simulations, Driving games, Role-playing games and Strategy games.

The top ten games of each genre are then listed, with a brief summary of the game, review score, publisher and contact number. Most of the games listed here were awarded *PC Zone* Classic status (90 per cent and above), and some managed a *PC Zone* Recommended award (80 per cent and above) at the time that they were reviewed. To achieve the highest accolade, a game must not only be very playable, entertaining and offer long-term appeal, but it must also be original and/or offer something new and worthwhile to the genre. To this end, we've included some sequels, which although scored lower than the original title, are deemed better games (they didn't get a higher score 'cos it had already been done and therefore they weren't exactly bursting with originality – okay?), so this guide isn't a list of the highest scoring games ever reviewed by *PC Zone*, but a guide to the best games now available.

When you're reading the reviews in the rest of the magazine, please remember to bear this section in mind. The highest scoring game is supposed to represent a benchmark in a particular genre, and we will always be comparing new games with this, in accordance with the above criteria. As a result, you will see games dropping out of this section as new and better titles are released, so keep your eyes peeled for new entries in each of the genres.

Jeremy Wells, Editor

Action



QUAKE II (97)

The sequel to "the most important PC game ever" turns out to be more than worth the wait. Despite the odd bit of slowdown, single-player and deathmatch games are in a league of their own. As Macca concluded in his review: "*Quake II* is pretty much perfect." Buy it now.

Publisher:
Activision (01895 456700)



TOMB RAIDER II (94)

The first game broke the mould, but the sequel even improves on the original. *Tomb Raider II* sports a curvier Lara, massive new levels to explore and a tidier control system. The game comes with native 3Dfx support and looks better than ever.

Publisher:
Core/Eidos (0181 636 3000)



JEDI KNIGHT: DARK FORCES II (94)

It's not *Quake*, but then it doesn't even try to be. But it is a compelling, technically superb blend of action and exploration wrapped up in the *Star Wars* universe. Altogether most impressive.

Publisher:
LucasArts/VIE (0171 368 2255)



HEXEN II (94)

The long-awaited, hub-based gib-fest sweeps into action with its trusty sword, hoping to carve a big 'H' on the chest of its older cousin, *Quake*. This is a first-person hack 'em off with balls as well as a big chopper.

Publisher:
Activision (01895 456700)



FADE TO BLACK (94)

The unofficial sequel to the excellent *Flashback*, this is a near-perfect blend of third-person exploration and combat action. The technical precursor to the fantastic *Tomb Raider*, it's a classic in its own right.

Publisher:
Electronic Arts (01753 549442)



DUKE NUKEM 3D (93)

The debate rages on, and there are still an awful lot of people who rate *Duke* over *Quake*. It's not as technically impressive, but brags gameplay by the bucketload in one-player mode and when played over a network.

Publisher:
Eidos Interactive (0181 636 3000)



PRIVATEER 2: THE DARKENING (94)

The ultimate mix of space combat, *Elite*-style trading and FMV action, *Privateer 2* was the first big budget release from Origin to use live action in a positive way. Packed with stars, this is pukka stuff.

Publisher:
Origin/EA (01753 549442)



MAGIC CARPET 2 (92)

The original wooed us with its speed and smoothness – this is even better, with new night-time bits, monsters and a very useful on-line help system. Technically exquisite, the game engine's yet to be bettered.

Publisher:
Bullfrog/EA (01753 549442)



TIE FIGHTER (94)

Still rated by many as the finest space combat sim ever released, it successfully blends all the kudos of *Star Wars* with a wicked new engine for super-fast *TIE* on *X-Wing* fisticuffs.

Publisher:
LucasArts/VIE (0171 368 2255)



WING COMMANDER: PROPHECY (88)

Wing Prophecy is far more linear than *Privateer 2*, but still packs an almighty gaming punch in the grolleys with its stunning sci-fi blasting action, dazzling special effects and ever-twisting storyline.

Publisher:
Electronic Arts (01753 549442)

Driving



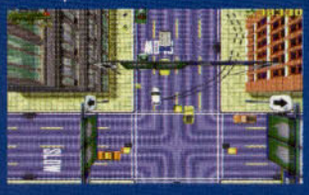
CARMAGEDDON (95)
Awesome arcade-style racer that's heavy on the hit 'n' run and gameplay. Loads of different cars to choose from, plenty of tracks, three ways to play and a fab multi-player network mode make this one of the most entertaining driving games ever.
Publisher:
SCI (0171 585 3308)



NASCAR RACING 2 (92)
A worthy upgrade featuring a new, smoother 3D engine, improved opponent AI, more controllable cars, a simple single-screen car set-up and a multi-player network option. The constant stream of headset messages adds atmosphere. A racing sim fan's must.
Publisher:
Sierra (0118 920 9100)



NETWORK Q RAC RALLY (94)
The seminal rally racer from Europress is the ultimate in skiddy, slidey action. 27 (count 'em) stages, loads of cars, a fantastic eight-way network option and varied terrain and conditions make this superior to the limited *Sega Rally*. Go buy it!
Publisher:
Europress Software (01625 859444)



GRAND THEFT AUTO (92)
This is the game that took over from *Carmageddon* as the media's favourite pet hate. Steal cars, dodge police, mow down pedestrians and cause mayhem in city streets in one of the most addictive driving games ever. *Micro Machines* on acid.
Publisher:
BMG (0171 973 0011)



MICRO MACHINES 2 (93)
The console classic is converted to the PC as new tracks provide a new challenge. The easy-to-use control system means it's user-friendly for the uninitiated. This version comes with a track designer.
Publisher:
Codemasters (01926 814132)



SCREAMER RALLY (91)
The *Screamer* games just get better. This is by far the best version, with its mad undulating tracks and high-speed courses. As well as 3Dfx support and network play, there's also a split-screen option.
Publisher:
VIE (0171 368 2255)



F1 RACING SIMULATION (93)
The sheer depth of realism is what makes *F1 Racing Sim* such an outstanding experience to play. Not only that, but it looks an absolute treat too – especially 3Dfx-ed up. A Crammond-beater.
Publisher:
Ubi Soft (0181 944 9000)



POD (90)
One of the first racing games to support 3Dfx, Direct3D and MMX. With awesome graphics and with new cars, tracks and power-ups promised to be posted regularly on the Internet, you'll never get bored.
Publisher:
Ubi Soft (0181 944 9000)



FORMULA 1 GRAND PRIX 2 (92)
The amazing sequel to the greatest F1 driving sim ever. Updated brilliantly for the 94/95 season with all-new detailed circuits, cars and teams. Ninja Pentium needed to run the hi-res mode – but it's still great.
Publisher:
MicroProse (01454 893893)



INDYCAR 2 (90)
If you don't mind going round and round in circles but still crave that unbelievable detail, this is the only real alternative to *F1GP2*. Technically mind-blowing, though a little chuggy on anything but a high-end Pentium in SVGA mode.
Publisher:
Sierra (0118 920 9100)

Sports



LINKS LS (94)
The classic golf sim gets an update, and unsurprisingly it's fab. There's more options, luscious graphics, a redesigned menu and a view selection system. There's even a built-in upgrader for all the old data disk courses you splashed out on.
Publisher:
Eidos Interactive (0181 636 3000)



PRO PINBALL: TIMESHOCK! (91)
Remember *Pro Pinball: The Web*? This, the second table in the series, is better in every way. Improved ball dynamics, detail and sound effects, and of course there's the return of the world's dirtiest computer game voice telling you to "Lock those balls".
Publisher:
Empire Interactive (0181 343 7337)



NHL 98 (94)
Another year, another *NHL*, but this one isn't just the best ice hockey game, it's one of the best sports games we've ever seen. Super 3Dfx-ed graphics, fantastic animation and awesome presentation make this a sports title not to be missed.
Publisher:
EA Sports (01753 549442)



VIRTUAL POOL 2 (90)
Okay, so *Virtual Pool 2* scored one per cent less than its predecessor, but this follow-up beats it hands down. 3Dfx support goes some way to pushing the series further, and the inclusion of English Pub rules make it a more essential purchase than before.
Publisher:
Interplay (01628 423666)



PGA TOUR PRO (94)
Nothing really distinguishes this version from the last, except for the brilliant and very easy to use Internet play facility. Waste no time, go and thwack some Americans now. Your country needs you.
Publisher:
EA Sports (01753 549442)



ACTUA SOCCER 2 (90)
Instantly accessible footie action in this latest instalment of Gremlin's high profile *Actua* series. Great graphics, easy control and a hidden Super Furry Animals team confirm *Actua 2*'s 'must have' status.
Publisher:
Gremlin Interactive (01142 753423)



NBA LIVE 98 (93)
With even better graphics and commentary than before, it's one of the best-looking PC sports games. This version sports 'realistic' faces and players of different heights – it's by far the best basketball game available.
Publisher:
EA Sports (01753 549442)



SENSIBLE SOCCER 2000 (90)
Can the best get better? In this case: yes. Sensible sensibly decided to leave the gameplay intact for this version of their classic game. Result? A classic update of the most playable footie game ever.
Publisher:
GT Interactive (0171 258 3791)



PETE SAMPRAS TENNIS 97 (92)
This game doesn't quite better *Super Tennis* on the SNES, but it's as close as you'll get on the PC. The simple control system means it's instantly playable, but we may as well tell you now that the women's skirts still don't fly up when they serve.
Publisher:
Codemasters (01926 814132)



MADDEN NFL 98 (87)
This latest PC incarnation is well up to the quality seen on the console versions, with all the features and slick presentation we now expect as standard for an EA Sports release. When it comes down to it, it doesn't really get any better than this.
Publisher:
EA Sports (01753 549442)

Adventures



ALONE IN THE DARK 3 (95)
Better than the previous *AITD* instalments, *Alone 3* is a tense, ambient tale of Navajo Indian magic and reincarnation that unfolds in the usual *AITD* manner. Now available as part of a compilation budget pack.
Publisher:
Infogrames (0181 738 8199)



INDIANA JONES AND THE FATE OF ATLANTIS (93)
Follow a post-*Raiders* Indy in his search for the submerged metropolis. Three ways to play make for a high replayability factor, and the inter-character banter is brilliant.
Publisher:
LucasArts/VIE (0171 368 2255)



BIOFORGE (95)
Futuristic *Alone In The Dark*-style game with impressive graphics, puzzles and soundtrack. Often preferred over *AITD* games as its unique blend of arcade combat is explosive. The only drag is EA's refusal to make a sequel for it.
Publisher:
Electronic Arts (01753 549442)



LBA 2: TWINSEN'S ODYSSEY (93)
Twinsen, the sprite with the egg-shaped head, is back – this time to thwart those pesky Esmers in this sumptuous sequel. The huge play area, coupled with seamlessly linked puzzles, creates a great looking and atmospheric adventure.
Publisher:
Electronic Arts (01753 549442)



SYSTEM SHOCK (95)
This futuristic first-person cyberpunk adventure from the makers of *Ultima* was initially overlooked by many people. Now available on budget, this is a must-buy for those new to the game. The graphics might be a little dated, but the atmosphere is invigorating.
Publisher:
Electronic Arts (01753 549442)



SAM & MAX (93)
Steve Purcell's hilarious dog/rabbit 'freelance police' duo's first and only PC outing, in which they need to solve a host of bizarre puzzles. An all-talkie adventure with a gag-laden script, this is an essential budget-priced purchase even if you're not a massive point-and-click fan.
Publisher:
LucasArts/VIE (0171 368 2255)



STAR TREK TNG: A FINAL UNITY (94)
A style oozer. At times it's as if you're inside a *Star Trek: TNG* episode. Non-linear and beautifully presented, it's a Trek-head must-buy. Yet to be bettered.
Publisher:
MicroProse (01454 893893)



THE CURSE OF MONKEY ISLAND (92)
The third game in LucasArts' classic *Monkey* saga delivers the goods big-time, much to the relief of adventure fans everywhere.
Publisher:
VIE (0171 368 2255)



DISCWORLD II (93)
Perfect Entertainment's immaculate sequel to *Discworld* follows would-be wizard Rincewind in his search for the Grim Reaper. Not as hard as the first game, but bigger and better looking. *Discworld II* is a universally appealing adventure game.
Publisher:
Psygnosis (0151 282 3000)



ECSTATICA II (90)
We dubbed it "An adventure with balls". It's hard, but it's one of the most rewarding adventures that we've ever seen. It constantly surprises and is sure to keep even the most battle-weary adventure fan busy for weeks.
Publisher:
Psygnosis (0151 282 3000)

Role-Playing Games



ULTIMA UNDERWORLD 2: LABYRINTH OF WORLDS (94)
This improves on almost every aspect of its prequel, *The Stygian Abyss*. You explore a complex, ever-evolving dungeon; it has unsurpassed atmosphere and interaction.
Publisher:
Origin/EA (01753 549442)



DIABLO (88)
Standard hack 'n' slash fare, but pulled off with such style that it's addictive. A great storyline compensates for repetitive arcade combat and supremely detailed animation makes it a superb coffee-table game.
Publisher:
Zablac/Blizzard (01626 332233)



REALMS OF THE HAUNTING (93)
Although overlooked by many fans of the genre, our Mallo gave it a whopping 93 per cent when he reviewed it some months ago. Still well worth a look if you happen to see it going cheap, *ROTH* is a well cool mix of adventure and RPG.
Publisher:
Gremlin Interactive (01142 753423)



TERRIS (88)
A MUD in the old-school style of text-based RPGs, but it's so addictive that we're still playing it. The various quests, puzzles and monsters will keep you going for days. The gameplay is excellent, if you can handle the 'texty-ness'.
Publisher:
AOL (0800 279 7444)



LANDS OF LORE: GUARDIANS OF DESTINY (92)
Four long years in the making, Westwood Studios' mammoth new adventure proved more than worth the wait. Sumptous visuals and a tremendous atmosphere combine to make *Lands Of Lore* an undeniable instant classic.
Publisher:
VIE (0171 368 2255)



MERIDIAN 59 (86)
This ground-breaking on-line role-playing game allows thousands of people to interact with each other in the same fantasy universe at the same time. Garish and horrible graphics aside, *Meridian 59* remains one of the best on-line multi-player RPGs around.
Publisher:
3DO Company (0181 296 1949)



FALLOUT (91)
This surprised everyone in the office who played it, and proved to be both very addictive and well conceived. Not quite on a par with the mighty *Ultima* series, but then what is?
Publisher:
Interplay (01628 423666)



RAVENLOFT: STONE PROPHET (78)
Better than SSI's previous AD&D *Ravenloft* RPGs. The player has to battle through a landscape populated by stone golems and scorpions. Average graphics, but the intuitive spell/combat system is a joy.
Publisher:
Mindscape (01444 246333)



ULTIMA VII (89)
Arguably the best of all the *Ultima* games, *Ultima VII* blends character interaction and the exploration of the world of Britannia. The last *Ultima* series to give complete party control. Check out the *Ultima Collection* for a real treat.
Publisher:
Origin/EA (01753 549442)



ULTIMA UNDERWORLD: THE STYGIAN ABYSS (PRE-PC ZONE)
This took role-playing games away from first-person tile-based RPGs. Amazing architecture, witty characterisations, layers of storyline and the best ending of any game in history.
Publisher:
Origin/EA (01753 549442)

Strategy



DUNGEON KEEPER (96)
A game with a genre almost impossible to define, *DK* takes *SimCity 2000*, *C&C* and *Ultima Underworld* and remoulds them into one hell of a title. Fantastic gameplay, and a lifespan on a par with the Queen Mother.
Publisher:
Electronic Arts (01753 549442)



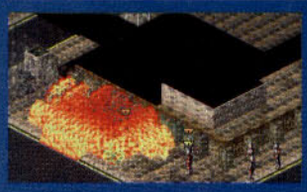
INCUBATION (94)
Deeply atmospheric turn-based strategy game with graphics to die for. This is a welcome change from the endless stream of *C&C* clones and is as challenging as it's action-packed.
Publisher:
Blue Byte (01604 232200)



SYNDICATE WARS (95)
One of the best strategy games of all time gets a sequel, and what a fabulous sequel it is too. It houses a wealth of intricate levels, gorgeous graphics and enough gratuitous violence to keep anyone happy.
Publisher:
EA/Bullfrog (01753 549442)



AGE OF EMPIRES (94)
Think of *Civilization 2*. Imagine the same great empire-building gameplay, some excellent graphical touches and comprehensive multi- and single-player options (all in real time). That's *Age Of Empires* in a nutshell.
Publisher:
Microsoft (0345 002000)



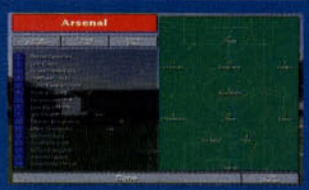
X-COM 3: APOCALYPSE (95)
A revamped engine and a healthy helping of real-time combat have brought the fantastically addictive *X-COM* series bang up to date. If you like your strategy games deep and meaningful, you should buy *X-COM 3* immediately. It'll keep you busy for weeks.
Publisher:
MicroProse (01454 893893)



SIMCITY 2000 (92)
A classic game that deserves its reputation as one of the all-time greats in the strategy world. Build and maintain the city of your dreams and cope with all the problems a real-life Mayor would come up against. It's a lot more fun than it sounds, trust us.
Publisher:
Maxis (0171 505 1500)



COMMAND & CONQUER: RED ALERT (94)
...or *C&C* in SVGA with a few new units. It's a testament to the original's gameplay that the sequel can get away with adding few new features and still be fun to play.
Publisher:
VIE (0171 368 2255)



CHAMPIONSHIP MANAGER 97/98 (90)
The best football management game ever gets its seasonal update and a few added extras – you can now play a number of leagues simultaneously, and change stats.
Publisher:
Eidos Interactive (0181 636 3000)



PUZZLE BOBBLE (94)
We can't agree exactly where *Puzzle Bobble* fits in *PC Zone Recommends*. Does it belong in here, with the *Civs* and *Sims* of the PC gaming world, or should it go in the action section? Who cares, as long as it's in...
Publisher:
GT Interactive (0171 258 3791)



CIVILIZATION 2 (90)
Explore the world, conquer territories and research new technologies in one of the most successful strategy games ever. It's not that different to the first one, but it merits a '90s update and a place here.
Publisher:
MicroProse (01454 893893)

Flight Simulations



FLIGHT SIM 98 (94)
Another year, and yet another flight sim from the mighty Microsoft. However, this time, with two new aircraft, a helicopter, hundreds of new airports and impressive 3D acceleration, it's really worth having.
Publisher:
Microsoft (0345 002000)



COMANCHE 3 (92)
This latest version is the finest we've seen, sporting juicy terrain graphics due to a revamped VoxelSpace engine. Despite an accurate flight model, it delivers intense gameplay, and is extremely good fun.
Publisher:
NovaLogic (0171 405 1777)



F-22 ADF (93)
DID do it again with this awesome new combat sim that leaves the competition firmly on the ground. Graphics and control to die for, it only really lacks a decent campaign. The *Total Air War* add-on pack will make it near perfect.
Publisher:
Ocean/DID (0161 832 6633)



JETFIGHTER III (91)
The follow-up to one of the most popular sims ever. Fly over three and a half million square miles of accurately-mapped terrain of South America. It really is just like being there. Oh yeah, you get to shoot things too, but sadly there's no duty free option.
Publisher:
Eidos Interactive (0181 636 3000)



LONGBOW 2 (92)
"*Longbow 2* is challenging, beautiful, exciting and fun – if you're 3Dfx'd up," we said in our review (issue 59). If you don't have any extra graphics hardware, there's only one thing to do – think 'upgrade', 'upgrade' and 'upgrade'. It'll be worth the investment.
Publisher:
Electronic Arts (01753 549442)



A-10 CUBA! (90)
Functional graphics for a game that really does capture the imagination, mainly because the plane is an absolute joy to fly. Although it's slightly limited due to a lack of a fully-fledged campaign it's still great fun, as well as being pretty speedy on a modest Pentium.
Publisher:
Activision (01895 456700)



US MARINE FIGHTERS (92)
Lovely graphics and a realistic enough flight model. Originally released as a mission disk for *US Navy Fighters*, this now comes as part of the *US Navy Fighters Gold* pack, so go get that instead!
Publisher:
Electronic Arts (01753 549442)



F/A-18 KOREA (90)
Any game that allows you to nuke cities comes highly recommended, especially when you add super-smooth graphics and a comprehensive mission editor. Not the best, but definitely worth a look.
Publisher:
Empire Interactive (0181 343 7337)



FLYING CORPS (92)
Action-packed WWI flight simulation with neato graphics. Some of you may recall *Red Baron* as one of the greatest WW1 flight sims ever – this improves on the old classic to become the best PC WW1 sim currently available.
Publisher:
Empire Interactive (0181 343 7337)



FLIGHT UNLIMITED II (84)
It can't really compete with the behemoth that is *Flight Sim 98*, and as a result is somewhat limited and claustrophobic. However, it does score highly for being more detailed in its smaller area, and much more fun.
Publisher:
Eidos Interactive (0181 636 3000)



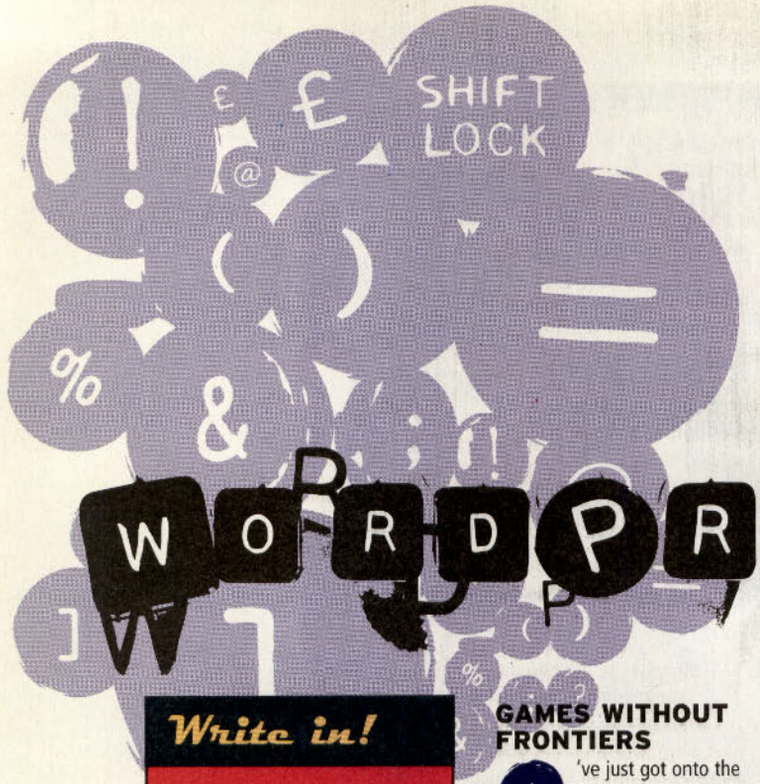
New Issue

On Sale 26th March

Stuff

Each month we review a huge range of products, add expert advice, plenty of entertainment and a dash of sex appeal. If you're looking for expert buying advice from micro hi-fi to football boots AND a bit more, look no further than Stuff.

GREAT GEAR FOR MEN



"Mirror, mirror on the wall, which is the best games server/3Dfx card/whatever of all," you ask. Ah, well, at the end of the day, that depends, answers Jeremy Wells.



WORDPROCESSOR

Write in!

Send your letters to:
WordProcessor, PC Zone, Dennis Publishing, 19 Bolsover Street, London W1P 7HJ

Send your e-mail to:
letters.pczone@dennis.co.uk

Website:
www.pczone.co.uk

Look out for the *PC Zone* chat forum if you're on-line.

NB: We at *PC Zone* reserve the right to edit, change and rewrite any correspondence to make ourselves appear smug, witty and intelligent.

GAMES WITHOUT FRONTIERS

I've just got onto the Internet, and after wasting a few days I thought I'd ask you to recommend some decent games servers. I've got onto Wireplay, but have found it sparsely populated. Any chance of a round-up and review of similar games servers, especially ones with *Quake II*? And what about a review of the MUDS like *Terris* and *Meridian 59*, because there must be some new ones by now?

By the way, your website is okay but slow – get it together. (Obviously I don't expect you to print this bit.) However, the mag's excellent. (Print this bit.)

JC, Suffolk

Wireplay is usually sparsely populated during the daytime; evenings, however, are much more lively. In fact we sometimes have problems getting onto their* Quake *servers because they're so full. Wireplay also have a number of* Quake II *servers up and running as well, so maybe you should look at the time you log on rather than looking for other servers (which are often slower than Wireplay* Quake *servers anyway). For the record though, have a look at www.pagan.net/~avatar/og.html, www.kali.net and www.zone.com if you're looking to explore other avenues of multi-player gaming on the PC.

Paul Mallinson, On-Line Editor



ON THE OTHER HAND...

The Microsoft SideWinder 3D Pro and its lesser cousins are perfectly usable in the left hand, since the grip is somewhat undiscriminating. However, I would suggest you try out the grip before you buy, as some people find it uncomfortable.

Tom Francis, e-mail

Our lefties at* Zone *found Microsoft's SideWinder Pro comfortable, but they couldn't use the thumb buttons and therefore proclaimed it as useless as other sticks.

QUAKE II ON-LINE

I have recently been playing *Quake II* over the Internet and have found that it runs incredibly slowly on the OpenGL *Quake* multi-player. I am using GameSpy 3D as well. I then tried running without it, which helped a lot, but I would rather use OpenGL, as you would probably guess.

People on the Net said the problem was probably the speed of my modem and processor (a 33.6 modem and a 166MMX). They also asked me what my ISP was, and when I said AOL they laughed and said get rid of it.

What is the best ISP for me? (I live in the Dorset area, in Ferndown, if that has any bearing.) And why do I get a much, much, much higher ping when running OpenGL *Quake*? Could that be due to my ISP as well? Normal *Quake II* is on average 450 pings; OpenGL *Quake II* is between 1000 and 6000 pings, and at this rate it nearly disconnects.

Martin, e-mail

We've had varying results with different ISPs. Try Wireplay. It's easy to use and you also get a pretty impressive ping.

3D DILEMMA

Help! I am running a P133 with 32Mb of RAM in Win 95. I recently bought the Creative Labs Graphics Blaster 3D. My next step, I decided, is to get a 3Dfx card, but I'm torn between the Orchid Righteous 3D and the Diamond Monster 3D. Please could you tell me which one I should get?!

Dave, e-mail



That depends on how soon you want it. If you want a 3Dfx card now, get the cheapest one you can find (they all use the same chipset, so there's no difference in how they perform). If you're in no great hurry, wait for the 3Dfx2 cards which should be on sale soon after you read this. They'll cost you though. The two cards you mentioned are currently the most expensive of the lot, so avoid them at all costs, okay?

LET'S GO MARINES

I read in a recent *PC Zone* that it is possible to network PCs at home using cheap network cards. I currently own two PCs, both Pentium 200s with 64Mb RAM and 3Dfx cards, and in March I am going to get a third.

At the moment I can play serial games with my brother and my friends on *Quake*, *Duke* etc. But when I get the other computer I would like to be able to link all three for deathmatch play in all these games, because at the moment I can only play one on one, and myself, my brother and the others would love to play with more players.

Ideally I would love to link these up as cheaply and with as little fuss and effort as possible. If you can help me

out I would be very grateful (but obviously not *that* grateful!).

Keep on giving the public a great mag. By the way, I hope to subscribe to *PC Zone* this month (money permitting). Keep on grooving, you crazy kids.

Jamie, e-mail

Funny you should bring this up. We'll be running a feature on network gaming in Tech Zone soon. We'll tell you exactly what to do and which components you should buy depending on your budget. Expect a full run-down on which games are best over a network too.

MAKE IT STOP!

In the latest issue of *PC Zone* there was a letter that is becoming far too common in PC magazines: the pro-3Dfx, anti-PowerVR letter is now the PC equivalent of the Sony/Sega/Nintendo MIBTY (mine is better than yours) syndrome.

I have a PowerVR card and I am perfectly happy with it. I advised a friend of mine to purchase a 3D card and was impressed with his choice of Orchid R3D.

Now, I am as impressed with the 3Dfx as anyone, but the industry needs more than one standard, and the PowerVR is a more than capable card for the job. My brother, in one of his more than insane ramblings, stated that "PowerVR is going to be the Betamax of the PC world". If this is so, then I hope the 3Dfx is not going to be the VHS, as that hasn't changed in over 15 years.

I don't know if John (Feb 1998) is a shareholder in 3Dfx, but he seems pretty passionate in his love for a PCI-bus card. All he stands to gain from the dominance of his particular card is... well, I don't actually know. Maybe he'll write back and tell us all. I stand to lose over £100 if my card becomes obsolete, so I hope he and all the others are wrong. I hope that in future more programs will come with PowerVR support and other card support as well.

By the way, I subscribe, so no nasty comments please!

Adam McManus, e-mail

Both 3Dfx and PowerVR have new cards coming out. Both say theirs is the best. We'll let you know what we think next month when we get both cards in for testing. Ultimately, the way ahead should be less complicated now that Microsoft are backing OpenGL over their hopelessly flawed Direct3D. Although the release of the more stable and powerful DirectX 5 greatly improved the functionality of D3D, the fact that Microsoft have decided to include OpenGL as part of Windows will now enable developers to choose which API to support without worrying that people with certain 3D cards will be left out. And that's got to be good news for PowerVR owners.

Letter of the Month

MULTI-PLAYER COMPROMISES



Congratulations on being a brill mag. I tend to swap and change with my choice of magazine, but I always come back to *PC Zone*. Other mags? Crap! Full of broken promises! Errr... shiteola! Yours is the only magazine that doesn't have a problem about swearing; in fact your... um... distinct style even uses bad language liberally. Nice one, lads!

Now I want to make a few points, the first one being in regard to the star letter last month concerning multi-player gaming. I don't own a network at home (let's face it, apart from Macca, who does?), and find that on-line games like *Ultima Online* are the only option open to those of us who are equipped with only a modem. And as for those who don't even have this, then single-player games are the only games of use. I find that if a game concentrates on supporting multi-player, then the single-player game is lost (eg *X-Wing Vs TIE*), and if not, then the multi-player is forgotten or even left out (*Tomb Raider 1* and *2*). Until games designers get the balance right, one group is always going to get left out, and at the moment that looks like being the single player.

The second point I'd like to make is that you are completely right about the *Carmageddon* issue. People seem to forget that there are age ratings for these games, and what they are playing is not real. If games encouraged people to the extent some people seem to think they do, then we would all be driving around in souped-up cars smashing up pedestrians, practising our piledrivers and stylised carnage. Anyone out of the 3.5 million people from whom you will no doubt receive letters complaining about the demo on last month's CD should take these points on board.

Richard Broderick, Essex

Let's face it, until on-line gaming is cheap and easy to use, developers will always regard the single-player market as very important. For example, if you take the US as a model, even though there is a very strong and active on-line community, most games are still to all intents and purposes single-player games – Tomb Raider is a good example. Hybrids that manage to be excellent one-player and multi-player games at the same time, such as C&C: Red Alert and Age Of Empires, are generally exceptions to the rule. Looking to the future, LucasArts are probably on the right track with Dark Forces II. The original idea behind Jedi Knight was that players would build up their skills and character through playing the one-player game before taking part in some multi-player deathmatch action. It's a nice idea that combines both elements but, whichever way you look at it, people will always get more enjoyment through playing against other people.

If your letter is selected as Letter of the Month we'll send you a bundle of T-shirts and maybe even a game as well. Coo!

THERE'S ONLY ONE RAYMOND VAN BARNEVELD!

Flicking through the TV channels last Sunday afternoon (11 Jan 1998), I came across the Embassy World Darts final on BBC2. I was surprised to see one competitor, Ray van Barneveld, from the Netherlands, wearing a *PC Zone* T-shirt. Is this a new sponsorship deal for the mag? (If so, well done, as he eventually won the championship!) I suppose it's not too unusual a choice of sport for you, as it's about as active a pastime as games-playing.

John, e-mail



Barney was actually sponsored by our sister magazine, PC Zone Benelux, which is published in the Netherlands. To be honest, it surprised us in the office too, as we knew nothing about it, but we're chuffed to bits for him all the same.

I HATE ABE

Slight disagreement, I'm afraid, but then that's the whole point of democracy and freedom of speech, right? *Oddworld: Abe's Oddysee* is not a good game. It does not deserve 89 per cent, and the reviewer should not have concentrated on how wonderful (in his opinion) it looks and sounds while avoiding the glaring flaws in its sadly minimalist gameplay. I know I am basing most of my judgement on the PlayStation version, but I have played the PC demo and there are no differences that in any way alter my opinion of this game. It is unnecessarily frustrating. Fact.



It is a pain in the neck and there is very little satisfaction to be gained when you 'luckily' manage to achieve something on the twenty-somethingth attempt after replaying a tedious section over and over again. It is not fun to play. No way, no how. The designers have managed to eliminate the fun element from 2D platform games through: a clever mixture of unlimited lives; a player character that alienates the player through its appearance and irritating behaviour (eg falling over and growling when you walk into a wall – mildly amusing the first time, but later... Aarghh!); boring repetition; pointless 'interaction' and brain-dead 'puzzles'.

This game is nothing more than a step backwards from *Prince Of Persia* and *Flashback*, retaining everything that was wrong with them and throwing in a whole new range of fun-ruining ideas all of its own under ▶

WORD PROCESSOR

a glossy veneer of pretty backdrops, and with an attempt at humour that misses the mark by a desperately wide margin.

Please let people know how bad this game really is. Either that or reply to this letter in *Zone*'s letters pages and tell me how at least one member of your magazine's staff regularly plays and enjoys this game. Of course, I won't believe you, but then that's my prerogative.

Please don't say a game is great merely because it has orange sky backdrops and fart sound effects. Gameplay is still important you know, even today.

JT, e-mail

Well we liked it. Mallo, Patrick, Dave and Miles completed it. Richie's currently writing the walkthrough (true, he is getting frustrated, but he is enjoying it), the first part of which can be found on page 116.



PC VS PSX

It's just so great to see that retro games are in vogue, along with retarded Letters of the Month. What the hell is that sad bastard Martin waffling on about in the Feb '98 Letter of the Month? Whatever possessed *PC Zone* to not only award this literary dog shit a special prize and a purple background, but also to openly agree with such a pile of blinkered, biased drivel? Let's remind ourselves what the tragic little loser had to say – and I won't twist or deliberately misinterpret anything in a vain attempt to make myself look clever.

He says: "PlayStation games sell really well because there are so many bad ones." Of course, the popularity of PlayStations and the associated games has nothing to do with Sony's marketing or the fact they have a rather nice product at an affordable price. True, the games are expensive, especially when compared to PC versions of the same titles, but then console games have always been overpriced. To be honest, I wonder if perhaps this theory of flooding the market with crap products to raise the sales of good ones might not be adopted by more companies.

Martin also cites the "huge and varied catalogue" of games available to PC owners. I suggest that nestling among all these superb titles are perhaps a couple that we would sooner forget. PC games are not icons of a holy order; there are some really crap ones out there too. Don't get carried away just because *GTA* and *Tomb Raider II* got released within a month of one another. For every *Quake* there is a *Phantasmagoria*, for every *Carmageddon* a *Project Paradise. (Dear readers – Mr Tapper goes on to list around 60 different PC and PSX games, along with their score, and comes to the conclusion that the average score for both platforms is a reasonable 7 out of 10, or 70 per cent – Ed.)*

JW Tapper, e-mail

We suggest you take your finger out of your arse and go and play Acclaim's* Battlesport *on the PSX.

THE WAY AHEAD

Great magazine – I'm a loyal subscriber. Anyway, with all these newfangled 3D cards, faster processors with better performance and what not, in a few years will we really be able to tell if a new game has one million more polygons and a faster frame rate? Companies will be so obsessed with perfection in the graphics department – and will probably have reached their peak – that I'm sure gameplay will fall as a result, and so will the many new original games that appear every once in a while, making most companies go bust. My current fave games are *GTA, The Curse Of Monkey Island* and *Jedi Knight* – more games like these, please? Anyway, keep up the good work. And just so you know, I'm about to renew my subscription.

David Toohill, e-mail

The 3D accelerator revolution has changed things dramatically. But ultimately, when graphics can't get any better, developers will have to spend more effort on gameplay, which is surely a good thing. It's happening with flight sims already, wouldn't you agree?

CRUELTY ZOO

I have bought every copy of *PC Zone*, and fully appreciate that it is aimed at the adult PC owner. I also agree with much of the editorial within the magazine regarding violent and gory games (my most recent purchase was *Grand Theft Auto*, and my subscription game was *Carmageddon*). But I have to say that the 'joke' item in February's issue, Doctor Helmut Wrestler's Cruelty Zoo, is in very, very bad taste. This type of subject is very easy to get wrong, and you have shown exactly how to do it. The idea itself is fairly distasteful, but the graphical depictions of young children inflicting violence on animals are far too realistic. It is obvious to me that they are computer-generated, but it would not be obvious to my young children. This particular page in my (subscription) copy has been torn out and consigned to the shredder. It is (otherwise) an excellent magazine. Please don't spoil it.

John Allard, e-mail



Charlie's Cruelty Zoo cartoon was originally intended as a satirical statement aimed at those people who nonsensically believe that playing computer games turns people into bloodthirsty maniacs. We're sorry if it caused you, your son or any of our readers offence. In retrospect we feel that the cartoon was in bad taste, and we can assure you that we will take greater care over our choice of subject matter in the future as far as the cartoon is concerned.

ACTUA VS FIFA

Your recent arguments about absolute percentages have never been more true than with the above games. Everybody has different views, but the most important part of the review is the comments, not the score. I bought *Actua Soccer 2* after reading your review. I agree that it has great graphics and sound, but shooting is a pain – you arrive in the box, power not quite at desired level… oh dear, computer has the ball. For me, the gameplay is too fast, resembling more a game of pinball, with too little pitch being seen to develop more than a schoolyard kick-and-rush game. A friend brought round *FIFA*, which has all the league teams (great, can stop Man Utd winning the league!), loads of special moves to learn (though not vital if you don't want to use them), and you can score goals from all over the park. I agree the speed is slightly slow at times, and I wish you could turn off the extra motion-capture before goal/corner kicks. *FIFA* wins hands down at dead-ball situations – you can actually have an idea where the ball might end up.

In conclusion, everybody has different views and everybody likes different game genres. So why argue over a percentage mark? It just wastes time which could be better spent playing the games you enjoy.

Andrew Webster, e-mail



Actua 2 isn't without its problems, but it's still the office favourite. If you're having trouble scoring goals, check out this month's Everything… on page 114.

WHAT A B-ORE

Being a very picky and fussy sort of person who annoys everyone, I have picked and fussed over two little points in your magazine that are very minor and petty, but I thought I'd write in and complain anyway. Firstly, in issue 54, in your *Age Of Empires* review (what a brilliant game), some silly bloke said you sent men out to collect gold and ore, and… er… I don't recall ever collecting ore.

Philip John Congreave (Annoying Bloke), e-mail

Bet you were always the last person picked for the footie team at school. And then they put you in goal.

QUAKE II SUCKS

I doubt whether this letter will get published, because your magazine is so far up iD's arse you can't see flawed software. I refer of course to *Quake II*.

I totally resent paying 30 quid for what is essentially a final beta version. I know all about the Christmas deadlines, customer demand, hype and all that stuff, but to put an unfinished game on the shelf is disgusting and nothing more than a rip-off.

I bought this game solely for the multi-player aspect, but it's practically non-existent, even after magazines like *PC Zone* extolled the virtues of its multi-player capabilities. I'd like to finish by asking a question: What version of this game did you review?

Shaun French, e-mail

Everyone in the* Zone *office (with the exception of Chris) is totally addicted to* Quake II *deathmatch. Get yourself some of



the converted* Quake *levels and get going. Unlike another magazine, we actually waited until there was finished code to play with before we reviewed it – hence their 'World Exclusive' review didn't even mention deathmatch play.* Quake II *isn't without its problems, but the majority view is quite clearly that* Quake II *rocks, whereas you obviously suck.

EVERYBODY LOVES QUAKE II

Y our massive generalisation that everyone loves *Quake II* is a bit over the top. I (and others I know) prefer *Jedi Knight* any day of the week. *Quake II* is merely *Quake* with a bit of fancy lighting. And what about the way people go on about the AI? What a load of bollocks. Do they mean the way the enemy ducks when you shoot at it? Big thrills. Or do they mean the way that some enemies run around in circles when you shoot them?

The other point is that *Jedi* is a lot easier to get going on the Net. Thanks to its support on the Microsoft Gaming Zone, you never have to search for a game using QuakeSpy or whatever. Also, *Jedi* requires more skill. In *QII*, the same old thing: get the biggest weapon – bang! Everyone else is dead. However, in *Jedi* you can have the best weapon and still get your arse kicked.

You seem to be very biased towards iD. I knew before *Quake II* even got released that you'd say it was the best thing to come along since sliced bread.

Peter Row, e-mail

W e do like* Quake II, *but the fact that we've got a LAN in the office has probably got a lot to do with that. We all like* Jedi *too, which is why we awarded it the* PC Zone *Special Award. The* Sith *add-on is quite awesome and adds an awful lot to the existing game.

No, we're not up iD's arse, we just like good games, and iD just happen to write good games.

WE DON'T DO VOODOO

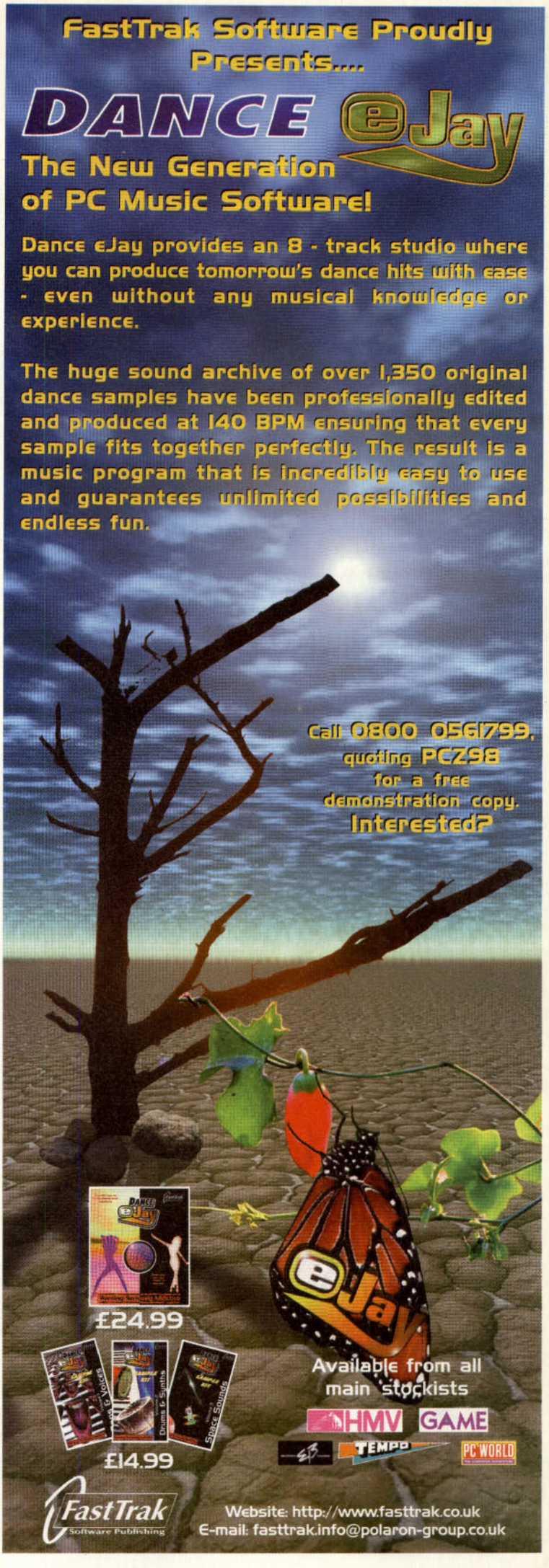
Y our reply to my letter (I Love Voodoo – your title, not mine – issue 60) is an argument relying on speculation that works both ways. While you are correct in saying that VideoLogic's third attempt to match the 3Dfx Voodoo chipset will arrive as Highlander in mid-'98, 3Dfx will not be resting on their laurels. In that time, 3Dfx will have established Voodoo 2, and will be beginning to ship their own 2D/3D chip Banshee, which promises to be faster again, in mid-'98 also. Just look at both companies' track records: 3Dfx has offered the best performance and game support and delivered on those promises. VideoLogic have (both in my opinion and in fact): abandoned first-generation adopters of their Apocalypse 1 card; issued cards to independent testers that deliberately sacrifice visual quality for speed when they detect industry benchmarks running; named their product so similarly to their main competitors' that it can be for no other reason than to mislead customers (VideoLogic's 3Dx chipset has only a one-letter difference from 3Dfx); and continue to issue press releases that are accurate to the letter but misleading by implication. Spin-doctoring of the worst kind.

As you note in your test, 3Dfx Voodoo cards are currently the best around, over a year after they hit the market. This is exactly the high ground that 3Dfx have aimed for, whereas VideoLogic, to quote your interview with Andy Keane, "only needs to perform just well enough". Yet VideoLogic still insist they are the best – as any good marketing department would, of course – regardless of the facts. I know which company I would trust to deliver on promises when speculating about their future performance.

John Shiali, e-mail

I feel I should defend VideoLogic here, simply because you refuse to wait and see how each of the new cards performs before forming an (ill-informed) opinion. The big problem with PowerVR cards was that they relied too heavily on processing power. This problem has already been addressed with Highlander. Voodoo 2 looks promising, but at this stage the main advantage it appears to have over Voodoo 1 is pure speed – and at some considerable extra cost (yes, you will have to ditch your Voodoo 1 card). The lesson to be learnt here is a simple one: both cards look promising, and only a fool would write off one or the other before they've both been thoroughly tested.

Chris Anderson, Deputy Editor



NEW ISSUE



ON SALE NOW

Comment



Shouldn't 'adult' games be about more than just blood and guts? asks Paul Presley.

Oh, do grow up!

'D LIKE TO GET PERSONAL FOR A MOMENT. I'm twenty-six years old. I regularly drink copious amounts of alcohol. I don't smoke, but if the desire ever hits me I'm legally allowed to walk into a tobacconist's and purchase some cigarillos. I pay full price at cinemas, football matches. I sometimes listen to classical music and enjoy it. I am, in short, an adult. And I play computer games.

The computer games industry is subject to many trends. Different game genres become both overpopular and overpopulated at regular intervals. Themes continually crop up and become evident across many platforms. The most recent trend has been outrage. *Doom* started it, *Quake* took hold of it, *Carmageddon* ran with it (straight to the tabloid press) and *Grand Theft Auto*, unfortunately, caught the brunt of it. The most common reaction to these games from the narrow-minded cretins at the heart of the fuss is, "But think of the children!" The most common defence is: "These are games for adults."

Well hang on a minute. Adults? Are you sure about that? Certainly, with an 18 rating applied to a game only adults can buy it. But just who, really, are these games *aimed* at? Why is it that in the computer game industry, the term 'adult' is synonymous with blood, guts and bodily organs spilling onto the linoleum?

The one thing I certainly don't want to do is to champion the ignorant and their calls for censorship. Too much public airtime is being given to these misguided and close-minded people who, armed with the barest of knowledge, proceed to condemn anything that isn't Christian, white and middle-class. I was watching a late-night television show recently in which one self-proclaimed professional Christian contradicted his own beliefs on tolerance, and threw *Grand Theft Auto* to the lions claiming – despite being unable to produce *any* evidence whatsoever – that playing it leads to criminal behaviour.

Well screw them. I have my own moral and ethical code. I live by my own standards. I don't try to force my behavioural patterns onto other people, and I would expect the same level of courtesy in return. The last thing I need is to be forced to live out my life by the misleading codes of conduct outlined in a misinterpreted, self-contradictory piece of medieval fiction. I am my own god, my own religion and my own belief system. I know the difference between right and wrong and I certainly don't need some misinformed censor to tell me different.

But at the same time I wouldn't mind seeing a few more game developers realising that 'adult' can also mean 'mature', as well as 'viscera'. I wouldn't take a child to see *In The Name Of The Father* at the cinema, for instance. Not because there are scenes of brutal carnality, but because the themes displayed would be beyond them.



Should people worry so much about a game in which you mow down pedestrians?

Naturally it's hard to apply maturity to certain genres, but I often find myself looking at games on the screen and thinking, "This is an insult to my intelligence." *Postal* was a recent example. I wasn't offended by the game because of the senseless violence involved, I was offended because the senseless violence was the only reason for the game's existence (and because, as a game, it was terrible).

I happen to agree with the opinion that playing violent computer games reduces the levels of stress and anger in a person. I believe this because I've experienced such feelings first-hand. I have felt incredibly peaceful and at ease after a game of *Quake II*. But every once in a while I would like to have my brain functions enhanced by a game; my intellect challenged; my emotional state moved instead of just my stomach. Where are the computer game equivalents of intense television dramas, of engrossing novels, of moving plays? Don't tell me such things aren't possible. The computer is as valid a medium for great literature as any other. Right from the start we had incredible writing on display in Infocom's adventure games.

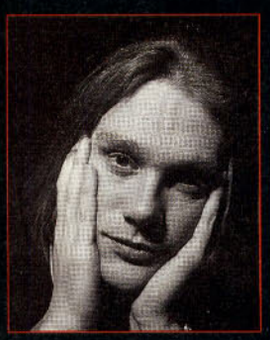
"I would like to have my brain functions enhanced by a game; my emotional state moved instead of just my stomach."

It doesn't have to be just adventure games, either. Apply levels of intelligence and maturity to any form of game design and we'll be off to a good start. Show us violence if you must, but show us the true effects of violence as well and maybe we'll then start to think a little more about our actions. Maybe we'll even start to grow up. Z



"Why is it that in the computer games industry, the term 'adult' is synonymous with blood, guts and bodily organs?"

STOP LOOKING BACK



Jeremy Wells supports Arsenal, yet spends his free time guiding Ipswich Town into the Premiership. Confused? Not as much as he is.

JUST WHEN OUR FRIDAY AFTERNOON *QUAKE* sessions had started to turn a little sour, two things happened to rekindle our obsession and set our mouse mats on fire once more. First of all, the *Mysteries Of The Sith* mission pack turned up pretty much out of the blue and caused much merriment and rejoicing throughout the office. News Editor Mallo has already dedicated a large portion of his free (and not so free) time brushing up his Jedi powers, and has even managed to discover and piece together a fragmented hidden level straight out of *The Empire Strikes Back* that features the Darth, Luke and that gantry scene. "In terms of level design it's so much better than *Quake*," Mallo gushes. "The engine might not be as good, but in terms of scripting and immersion it's just brilliant."

Having spent the best part of two weeks looking over his shoulder and nabbing the CD when he was at lunch, the rest of the office are for once united in their opinion. At 20 quid you'd have to be mad not to buy the *Sith* mission pack. If you still need convincing after reading Mallo's glowing review (page 72), then play the exclusive one-level demo on this month's *CD Zone* and find out for yourself why we think LucasArts have set a new benchmark for 3D action games.

"Our mouse mats have been set on fire once more – by *Mysteries Of The Sith* and the *Quake Final Point Release* patch."

Secondly, iD finally stuck the *Final Point Release* patch for *Quake II* on the Net at last. If you've been keeping an eye on our letters pages you'll know that a number of readers have written to us to complain about the number of bugs that plagued the original release, and also lament the lack of multi-player support. The new patch fixes most of the bugs and includes eight new deathmatch levels which we've been playing almost solidly for the past fortnight. They're not all great, but the new levels have managed to sustain interest in a game that was released some months ago. What's more, it's free and it's on this month's cover CD. And whether you hate iD for releasing an incomplete game or blame the marketing men for making us wait, we say thumbs up to iD for finally sorting it out.

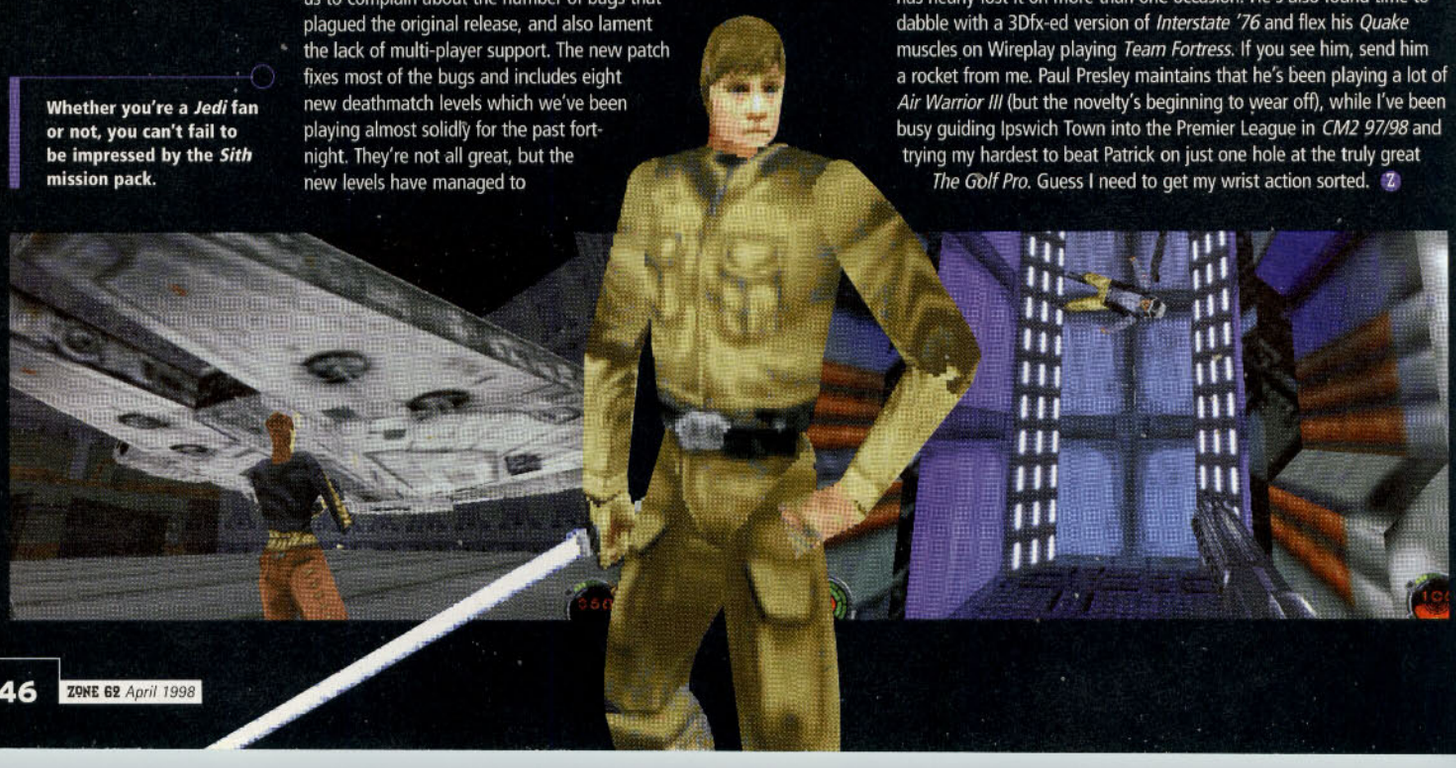


The new 'official' deathmatch levels for *Quake II* have been keeping us all very busy indeed.

Apart from *Quake II* deathmatch and *Sith*, everyone else (and in particular Steve Hill) has been blown away by the awesome *Ultim@te Race Pro*. Again, we've got a LAN so we've been lucky enough to fully appreciate the multi-player aspect, but there is an on-line multi-player option, and as a single-player game it's still a lot of fun.

Patrick's been devoting plenty of time to lowering his handicap playing *The Golf Pro* ("It's 14 at the moment, but I'm getting better all the time") and preparing for the new F1 season by playing Psygnosis' *F1 97*. "It's much better than the last game," he tells us, "and ideal for people who can't be bothered with a full-on sim."

As well as indulging in some serious networked *Ultim@te Race* sessions and a bit of *Quake II* (obviously), Charlie Brooker is still beavering away at *Fallout* and has finally got round to upgrading his machine. Chris is also hooked on *Fallout* and is spending some time with *F-22 ADF*, which he says has got "the best graphics ever seen in a flight sim" – a statement we'd all have to agree with. Richie's spent most of his time writing our guide to *Abe's Oddysee*, and as a result has nearly lost it on more than one occasion. He's also found time to dabble with a 3Dfx-ed version of *Interstate '76* and flex his *Quake* muscles on Wireplay playing *Team Fortress*. If you see him, send him a rocket from me. Paul Presley maintains that he's been playing a lot of *Air Warrior III* (but the novelty's beginning to wear off), while I've been busy guiding Ipswich Town into the Premier League in *CM2 97/98* and trying my hardest to beat Patrick on just one hole at the truly great *The Golf Pro*. Guess I need to get my wrist action sorted.



Whether you're a *Jedi* fan or not, you can't fail to be impressed by the *Sith* mission pack.

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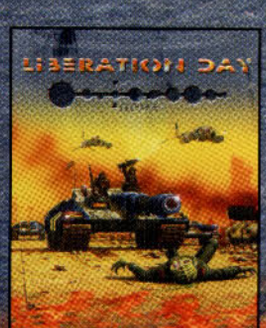
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